

# **Interpersonal Behavior and the Student-Teacher Relationship:**

*Tracing the Behaviors and Perceptions of Students and Teachers in Two Academic Enrichment Programs for Middle School Students in the United States*

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Master of Philosophy in Comparative and International Education

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

June 2014



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<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Print: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

## ***Abstract***

A key issue driving many educational initiatives in the United States is the opportunity gap that often exists from community-to-community, school-to-school and student-to-student. Students coming from low-income backgrounds are typically afforded fewer high-quality educational opportunities than are their wealthier counterparts. The issue of summer learning loss is also a particularly poignant one for underserved students, thus many different entities have begun to step in to offer beneficial summer programming to offset the regressions that could potentially occur over the summer. These academic enrichment programs generally exist to provide beneficial supplementary opportunities for underserved students.

In some instances, many students may lack high-functioning support systems in their schools and in their communities. For students who may be at-risk for less than optimal development, it is important that they connect with individuals or programs that can positively support their growth. One potential resource, among many, is a supplementary academic enrichment program. Another is the teacher. Since the role of the teacher is potentially substantial for the development of the student, this particular study looks at the perceptions of both teachers and students regarding the interpersonal behaviors that exist within the student-teacher relationship.

Using the Model for Interpersonal Teacher Behavior as a tool for analyzing the transcripts of semi-structured interviews with participants, this study tracked the interpersonal behavioral philosophies and strategies of teachers in two summer academic enrichment programs operated by two independent schools in the US Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This study also simultaneously considered the preferences and experiences of students regarding the interpersonal behaviors of their teachers. The paper then examines the points at which the perceptions of the sampled students and teachers both converge and also diverge from each other. Then the paper continues by considering the reported interpersonal behaviors and philosophies in light of resilience theories.

The study revealed a wide-array of interpersonal behaviors to be present in the experiences, philosophies and strategies of both students and teachers. The study found that students and teachers match a great deal in their perceptions, but that they do diverge from each other in some aspects. The study also found that teachers positively support many of the recommendations made for promoting resilience, but the ways in which students and teachers

talk about supporting such experiences are different from each other. The paper finishes by considering the implications for both teachers and for academic enrichment programs.

## *Acknowledgements*

The completion of a master thesis would not be possible without the support of many wonderful people. First and foremost, I would like to express my sincerest thanks to my parents, Joel and Caroline, for their unwavering support. Without their support, I would not have had the opportunity to study at the University of Oslo, nor would I have had the chance to live in a country as beautiful as Norway. From the day I was born they have prioritized education and have instilled within me a passion for bettering myself and for helping those around me. I credit their influence as the key for any successes that I have had or will have in my life.

Furthermore, I want to thank my supervisor, Professor Jon Lauglo, for his ability to balance sensible thesis-related advice with witty banter. He seems to have a keen sense for achieving a balance between the two. Without his feedback and his support this work would undoubtedly be of lesser quality. I also want to thank Dr. Fengshu Liu for stepping in to help me with my findings chapter while Professor Lauglo was hiking the Camino Trail in Spain.

In addition to Professor Lauglo and Professor Liu, I also offer thanks to Professor Lene Buchert and Dr. Teklu Bekele Abate. Each and every course we took with them was an enriching learning experience and was instrumental in informing the eventual construction of a quality thesis. I also have deep gratitude for the administrative work of Camilla Bakke and Kristi Barcus, without their commitment the Comparative and International Education program would not operate as smoothly as it does.

Sometimes it would be easy to take our classmates for granted, however, the CIE 2012-2014 cohort served as the backbone for our individual and collective successes. Without their support and friendship none of this work would have been possible. I hope that future cohorts are as fortunate as we have been.

A qualitative study of this nature would not be possible without the presence of willing and enthusiastic participants, both of which I had in abundance. My sincerest gratitude goes out to the two enrichment programs that participated in my study. They did not have any obligation to participate, but they did so with extreme willingness. Thank you to the students, teachers, parents and program administrators who went out of their way to assist me with my research.

Additional thanks goes to the librarians at the Shrewsbury Public Library, the baristas at Café Noir and the baristas at Nu Café, as these three locations were made temporary places of study during the time I spent studying and researching in Central Massachusetts. Thank you for being so accommodating during each of my visits.

I also want to thank the folks at Worcester Academy, Beloit College and Gettysburg College. They built an unparalleled educational and professional foundation for myself and countless other fortunate students.



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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### ***1.1 Concern about education in the United States***

Popular rhetoric suggests that the American public education system is not performing as highly as it should. Moreover, many common citizens believe that Americans, simply because of their national affiliation, should always perform at a higher level than those from other countries. Others, of course, take a more balanced and fair approach when developing their opinions on the state of the American education system. Still, The Program for International Assessment (PISA), a test often cited by the popular media that gauges the academic skills of fifteen year olds in more than sixty countries, has consistently been brought to the attention of the American public—framed so that Americans can understand the need to “wake up to this new educational reality.” Inevitably, this leads to finger pointing, eschewing of blame onto others and panicking over future prospects of international competitiveness.

In a review of press releases from different American news outlets around the time of the December 2013 dissemination of the PISA results, there were varied responses, many of which were either explicitly or implicitly politically rendered. Generally, the responses all acknowledged that the United States has stagnated in terms of educational performance. However, the responses primarily differed on three dimensions: the actual significance of the results, the methodological reliability of the results and the long-term meaning of the results.

This study subscribes to the view that suggests that flaws exist in the PISA methodology, thus creating results that are not adequately contextualized to American demographics (Carnoy & Rothstein, 2013, p. 2). Furthermore, it takes into consideration the general message that there is a danger in slipping behind other countries in measures of educational prowess, but it fully subscribes to the belief that there are many other elements of the educational process that can impact measures of a countries’ intellectual competitiveness apart from results on a standardized test—namely the establishment true equality of educational opportunity. Obviously, it subscribes to the view that there is an educational opportunity gap and does so by accepting that there is a need to address disparities by promoting equality of opportunity for all American youth.

At the October 2013 *Education Nation* conference, US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stated, “*We have a real state of crisis. This is much bigger than education. We have to close*

*what I call the opportunity gap. The gap between the haves and the have-nots is far too wide.*” (NBC News, 2013). This quote, while perhaps a bit dramatic, drives the motivation for this study. To close the opportunity gap, we need to examine the programs and processes already attempting to do so.

## ***1.2 Summer and/or Weekend Academic Enrichment Programs***

One such strategy for providing conditions conducive to reducing the educational opportunity gap is to extend the learning time available to students. This can be accomplished through extending the formal schooling year, extending the formal school day, offering weekend programs or implementing summer bridge programs. Research that has supported the implementation of summer bridge programs found that summertime has the potential to be a period of extreme learning loss and regression for students, especially for low-income students (Cooper, Charlton, Valentine, & Muhlenbruck, 2000, p. 7). Additionally, President Obama pointed out that the US school year is on average one month shorter than in most other economically developed countries. The barrier to extending the school calendar lies in the additional costs it would add to already tight educational budgets. Given this acknowledged need for more time, many private independent schools (in addition to other types of schools and organizations) have begun to implement summer programs that attempt to lessen this summer regression for their own students and/or students from surrounding public schools. These programs are not necessarily geared solely towards reversing summer learning loss and regression. Some operate to give the enrolled students expanded resources and enrichment opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to them in their traditional public schools. Such programs often have selective admissions processes. Given their selective nature, it might be easy to assume that they are selective only with regards to academic promise or achievement. However, each particular program operates under its own premise and with a targeted student population. According to a *Pathways to College Network* report, they are generally defined as student-centered programs that focus on academic growth and/or character development. They also tend to be supplementary in nature, focused on empowering, geared towards offering services that they do not receive at their traditional schools and that they aim towards an ultimate goal of their students graduating high school and continuing to and on through higher education (Pathways to College Network, Gullatt & Jan, 2003).

Furthermore, the RAND Corporation's education arm produced a report that was commissioned in response to the Wallace Foundation's decision to encourage district-supported summer learning programs, especially in underserved, urban communities. Furthermore, Michelle Obama launched the administration's summer learning initiative titled "United We Serve: Let's Read, Let's Move". This highly publicized movement has created public interest in the potential held within summer academic enrichment programs. Thus it is worthy for Wallace and RAND to produce a report that touches on the need for such programs and on the effectiveness variables that exist for such programs already in existence (RAND, 2011, p. xiii).

Through addressing the two aforementioned questions, the report produced an assortment of findings relevant to summer academic enrichment programs. First, the study found that summer learning loss disproportionately affects low-income students and subsequently contributes greatly to the achievement gap (RAND, 2011, p. 22). Secondly, students who do not attend such summer learning programs have lesser outcomes than do similar students who do attend them, at least for the two years immediately following the conclusion of the program (RAND, 2011, p. 36). Thirdly, the report found it to be crucial for programs to put systems in place that maximize quality, enrollment and attendance (RAND, 2011, p. 32-34). Lastly, the study found that cost was a substantial barrier for the operation of high-quality summer learning programs, but that partnerships between the district and community based organizations (CBO's) could defray some of the costs (RAND, 2011, p. 43).

Of particular relevance to the present study is the finding concerning the need for high-quality summer learning programs, not simply just the mere presence of such programming. The RAND report offered detailed recommendations in response to their findings. These recommendations included: investing in high-quality staff members, early program planning, embedding best-practices into the program's design, embracing creative thinking in the securing of funding and for programs to consider the role that forming partnerships might play (RAND, 2011, p. xviii). The present study looks at one element of what high-quality staff might entail, with the goal of contributing to best practices for summer academic enrichment programs.

### ***1.3 Positive Classroom Environments***

In a study that looked at the factors affecting student learning it was suggested that individual or classroom-specific factors are significantly more important than are school or district level factors (Waxman, Huang, Anderson, & Weinstein, 1997, p. 49). Thus it becomes crucial to consider the dynamics of the classroom environment, though studying this level of interaction is difficult because of the variability that exists from setting to setting.

The classroom setting is of particular importance to the underserved and under-resourced students that are at the center of this study. For students coming from low-income backgrounds, there is greater chance that their home environment might be incompatible with the school or classroom culture (Ogbu, 1992, p. 289). It is then the school and those who work within it that become instrumental in fostering an environment that positively includes students from different backgrounds. For students from low-income backgrounds (a risk factor for low school achievement, low persistence, etc.), early alienation from the culture of their school can be of great detriment to their long-term academic prospects, thus they claim it is important to focus on social integrating students from an early point (Crosnoe, Johnson & Elder, 2004, p. 75). Also, school experiences are strongly tied to stereotype fulfillment (Steele & Aronson, 1995), which suggests that if students have school experiences that are detrimental to educational resilience, they may then feel that they have fulfilled any cultural stereotypes associated with their family or cultural background. Again, it is the responsibility of teachers and administrators to create an environment that is conducive to school success for all students.

A positive classroom environment is an environmental protective resource for students. After reviewing an OECD report containing averages on hours that teachers spend teaching students in the United States, the importance of students having positive experiences with teachers becomes fairly obvious (OECD, LaRock, 2012, p. 9). This report showed that the average lower-secondary (middle school) teacher in the US spends 1,070 hours per year teaching students, which is higher than all but two other OECD member countries. While I was unable to find reliable data on the average number of hours students spend in school each year, one could surmise that if students spend that much time in a formal classroom setting they likely spend a good deal more in a school environment—leading to a large amount of time annually spent in school. In the United Kingdom it was estimated that students spent an average of 15,000 hours per year in school (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979, p. 1). While much literature suggests the United States has a lower figure, it still will undoubtedly turn out



to be a large portion of time spent in school. If we know that a positive classroom is important and that students spend a great deal of time in them, then significant focus must be placed on the individuals that manage classrooms—teachers.

Some argue that school objectives cannot be met unless teachers provide their students with a positive, caring and supportive classroom environment (Noddings, 1992). After all, positive classroom environments are associated with improved academic achievement and outcomes such as increased motivation, self-concept and academic engagement (Fraser & Walberg, 1991). On the other hand, some may feel that this is a rather simplistic view that is easy to receive. Perhaps it is the enthusiasm, communication style, or a host of other factors that could make a teacher easy to learn from or adept at forming relationships with their students. However, this study subscribes to the belief that teacher's possess the ability to establish a positive environment in the classroom for their students, and that if they do so they will be *more* likely to develop relationships with their students and hopefully see their students on through to eventual success in school.

#### **1.4     *Student-Teacher Relationships***

This study is looking particularly at students in grades six through nine, in the American system referred to as the *middle school* years. These students typically fall between the ages of 12 and 15, which is generally a time of self-discovery and identity formation. It is also a time of increased mistrust of teachers, stemming largely from the necessary transition between fifth and sixth grades in K-5/6-8 systems. Furthermore, Eccles found that adolescent development is characterized by growing desires for autonomy, peer orientation, self-focus, heterosexual relationships, abstract cognitive abilities and identity formation (Eccles, 1993, p. 185). As a cause for worry, she found that at this transitional stage there was also a heightened sense of self-awareness in which there was, unfortunately, a greater tendency for teachers to emphasize competition, peer comparison and ability self comparisons—all of which could create mismatching between the relationship environment and developmental stage. To students, this can lead to feeling as though there is a decrease in opportunity to form relationships with their teachers (Eccles, 1993, p. 180). Conversely, the adolescence years are often the period in which youth first begin to seek out relationships with adults outside of their homes and research has shown that a relationship with a non-parental adult can be the single most crucial element in protecting youth from the risks that they face (Scales & Gibbons, 1996, p. 366). These non-parental adults can be extended family members, parents

of friends, coaches, mentors, teachers or numerous other types of people. As we know, youth spend a large amount of time at school, surrounded by their teachers and peers. Not surprisingly, this heavy exposure gives students and teachers ample opportunities to develop, or neglect to develop, relationships with each other.

A teacher's friendliness and their ability to support and facilitate the growth of their students through the interpersonal behavior that they impart, is a well-known factor in the construction of a positive classroom environment (Wubbels, Brekelmans, & Hooymayers, 1991). The amount and quality of student-teacher interactions are two important outcomes-related educational variables (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994, p. 76). Furthermore, studies have found that teachers in effective schools spend more time interacting with their students and students report more personal support than do students in ineffective schools (Waxman, et al., 1997, p. 56). In a single-observation based study, in which classes were observed for forty-five minutes, student-teacher interactions in the classroom occurred at a rate of 70% in effective schools, and at a rate of 47% in ineffective schools (Waxman, et al., 1997, p. 54). Furthermore, if interacting with students is so important, it is necessary to develop an understanding of which behaviors contribute positively to the maintenance of positive student-teacher relationships.

Werner (1989, p. 74) found that a favorite schoolteacher was a frequently reported confidant or positive role model amongst resilient youth. In this case, resilient youth were those who overcame moderate to severe degrees of perinatal stress, were born into poverty, were reared by mothers with little formal education, and lived in a family environment troubled by discord, desertion, or divorce, or marred by parental alcoholism or mental illness. For the present study, no data was collected on these dimensions, but for most students under study there was a dimension of being born into a lower socioeconomic group. Noddings (1988, p. 10) simply stated that children do more for those that they love and that love them in return. In a seminal work by Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An alternative approach to education* (1992), she argues that the concept of care should be placed at the center of today's schools. To some, she is taking an "anti-intellectual" approach, but she feels that if schools recognize the importance of care inside their walls, it is likely that other educational processes (achievement efforts, etc.) that have been deemed important will eventually follow suit.

## **1.5 Defining Key Terms**

As we have seen, there is a good deal of research that suggests the importance of positive student-teacher relationships for educational outcomes and for resilience amongst at-risk students. At this juncture it is important to spell out how this paper views resilience and interpersonal behavior. In this context *resilience* is; “*a class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development.*”(Masten, 2001, p. 228). In this study, no attempts are made to measure *resilience*, but attempts are made to draw out how interpersonal behaviors manifest themselves within conditions shown to be conducive for resilience amongst at-risk youth. Generally, when referring to *interpersonal behavior* I will be speaking about *the dimensions and nature of communications between teachers and students*, whether the communications are implicit or explicit.

From this premise, this paper will address the intersection of the student-teacher relationship, interpersonal teacher behavior and resilience within the context of short-term or periodic academic enrichment programs that serve students from backgrounds that are perceived to often place students at greater risk for lower school outcomes.

## **1.6 Cultural Context**

This particular study, as we already know, aims to dissect the points at which student-teacher relationships, interpersonal behavior and resilience connect to each other. As in most studies of both direct and indirect social interaction, every finding can be culturally contextualized. Given that this study focuses on one of the most basic elements of social interaction—the interpersonal relationship—it is important to consider how culture can possibly impact its findings.

According to Hofstede (1986, p. 301) each of four basic institutions of society (family, school, community and job) have role types that consist of unequal but complementary responsibility (parent/child, teacher/student, boss/employee, etc.). The ways in which each role is often played out is reflective of how a culture views particular relationships. Moreover, these relationships often act as vehicles for transmitting cultural norms or traditions from one generation to the next (Hofstede, 1986, p. 302). Four dimensions of interaction that are affected by culture are: individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, strong/weak uncertainty avoidance and low/large power distance.

In addition to these more general elements of cultural roles and role patterns, there are three additional culturally-based problems that exist within the student-teacher relationship. The first of which refers primarily to differences across cultures in reference to the social position of students and teachers. For example, culturally dependent questions about teacher compensation, prestige of teaching in private or public schools and pedagogical independence tend to arise (Hofstede, 1986, p. 303). The second refers to cross-cultural curriculum relevance. In this instance, there are questions about curricular relevance or appropriateness, particularly when teachers or systems do not adequately consider culture during the planning and delivery processes (Hofstede, 1986, p. 304; Ogbu, 1983, p. 178). The third is referring to differences in cognitive abilities and orientations amongst student and teachers across their respective or collective cultures (Hofstede, 1986, p. 305).

Hofstede's Four-Dimensional Model of Cultural Differences (individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, strong/weak uncertainty avoidance and low/large power distance) carry with them pedagogical tendencies and norms. The following attempts to briefly explain the basics of each.

In individualist cultures there tends to be an assumption that any person naturally looks after their own interests or those of people close to them. In collectivist cultures it is assumed that people are born to in-groups and detaching is very difficult because of the loyalty they have developed to the cultural group (Hofstede, 1986, p. 307). Power Distance refers primarily to the extent that a culture's less powerful people accept inequality in their level of power (Hofstede, 1986, p. 307). Uncertainty avoidance refers the extent that a member of society feels nervous when faced with uncertainty or lack of structure. Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance are active, aggressive, impulsive and intolerant. Conversely, a culture with low uncertainty avoidance is generally contemplative, relaxed and tolerant (Hofstede, 1986, p. 308). Lastly, masculine cultures strive for high levels of distinction between the social roles of men and women, while feminine cultures aim for blurred and shared roles for both males and females (Hofstede, 1986, p. 308). In the elaborated literature review, an attempt will be made to show how such qualities can manifest themselves in the school context.

Given that this study is limited to the American context, it is important to understand that the United States population is a highly diverse mix of cultures and ethnicities. Each of these groups arrived in the United States under different circumstances, all of which historically frame and are framed by the community-specific factors present (Ogbu, 1992, p. 289-290).

For a teacher to truly understand how to communicate with a student, it is crucial that they consider the group affiliations of each student that they work with (Fisher, Waldrup, & den Brok, 2005, p. 35). This dimension can become quite challenging for teachers because of the tendency for youth to struggle with the dilemma of adopting or rejecting their host culture and/or maintaining or embracing their traditional familial culture.

As background for this paper's findings, it is important for the reader to understand that relationship dynamics are culturally contextual. It is also important to understand that the data collected in this study are not generalizable outside of the American context. Even within the American culture there is a need to recognize that it would be restricting to treat all cultural minorities as a single group (Ogbu, 1983, p. 168). Furthermore, the diverse set of participants necessitates the consideration of cross-cultural exchanges at the personal level. Hence, nothing in this study can be reliably applied to generate wider beliefs without careful cultural consideration.

### ***1.7 Research Problem and Rationale***

With a great deal of research pointing towards the general effectiveness of supplementary academic enrichment programs for underserved student populations, the topic warrants analysis to contribute findings that can help programs and teachers within them to improve. As it has been drawn out in the above sections, consideration of the student-teacher relationship and interpersonal teacher behavior are warranted, particularly for students at greater risk for weaker school outcomes and weak overall development.

A large portion of literature has focused on deficit-based models to explain differential outcomes for particular groups. Resilience research has instead focused on competencies and characteristics that at-risk individuals do possess and can mobilize to overcome obstacles to optimal development (Masten, 2001, p. 227). As we know, Masten (2001, p. 228) has defined resilience as "a class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of threats to adaptation or development." To promote resilience, both personal and environmental protective resources must be mobilized and protected. Personal protective resources are those of which the individual has personal ownership. Environmental protective resources are the outside variables that constitute the world the individual lives within (Alva, 1991, p. 20). The teacher is among the notable environmental protective resources available to youth.

The teacher is an unavoidable figure in the lives of youth. Given the heavy exposure that students and teachers have to each other, it is crucial to try to better understand the conditions that both parties identify as characteristic of their relationship. Since teachers in weekend/summer academic enrichment programs generally have a short timeframe to impact their students, it is important for them to understand how they might be able to better develop relationships in the context of such programs. In doing so, they may be able to have a positive impact as an environmental protective resource conducive to resilience among their students.

### ***1.8 Research Questions***

This study aims to provide its audience with an understanding of the interpersonal dynamics that exist between students and teachers within two summer and weekend academic enrichment programs that enroll underserved students typically from low-income backgrounds. An attempt is made to shed light on how such interpersonal behaviors may contribute to the rise of conditions that may lead to resilience among these at-risk students. The following questions have helped guide the research process and helped to inform the data analysis and interpretation process:

1. What interpersonal behaviors exist between students enrolled in summer/weekend academic enrichment programs and their teachers?
2. At which points do the perceptions of students and teachers intersect and/or diverge with regards to the interpersonal behaviors that exist between each other?
3. What sort of implications do the interpersonal behaviors of teachers and also the student's receipt of those behaviors have for factors shown to be conducive to at-risk student resilience?

### ***1.9 Limitations of the Study***

This particular study was initially undertaken with the aim of isolating the student-teacher relationship within the academic enrichment programs themselves. However, the data that emerged through my interviews consisted largely of information that was related to both the academic enrichment programs and also to the traditional classrooms that both the students and teachers occupied during the regular school year. Furthermore, the interviews that were conducted were completed without a framework for analysis to inform their design. This was

a learning point for me, specifically about the importance of properly reviewing relevant literature before entering into the field. However, this limitation was not hugely detrimental in the end. The semi-structured nature of the interviews and the general nature of the questions asked made the data collected appropriate for analysis through more than one specific framework.

Another element that could possibly be considered a limitation would be the rather simplistic nature of how students speak about their experiences. It has taken a good deal of energy to fairly code their words in the appropriate way.

Furthermore, due to ethical concerns of working with children in the United States, I was unable to collect personal information on the participants. This made it difficult to contextualize participant's responses as they were related to culture, experience and other potentially influential variables. As a result, references to such dimensions can be no more than speculative in nature.

### ***1.10 Framework for Analysis***

The next chapter will detail the particularities of the framework for analysis. This paper has utilized Theo Wubbels' and his colleagues' Model for Interpersonal Teacher Behavior. This model served as the primary guide for the coding of interviews with both students and teachers. This paper has also used resilience theories to help in the consideration of the role that interpersonal teacher behaviors can have on mobilizing the protective resources that are believed to be conducive to at-risk students' resilience.

## **Chapter Two: Analytical Framework**

The sections that follow will explain the framework chosen for the purpose of processing the interview data that was collected during the fieldwork period. Theo Wubbels (1985) and his colleagues developed a particularly useful model to aid in the study of the inter-relational aspects of teacher behavior, the *Interpersonal Model of Teacher Behavior*. This model was important in guiding coding and data interpretation. In addition, this study considers findings from studies that have looked at the conceptions teachers have of the relationship dynamics that have been found to be conducive to resilience among at-risk students. The behaviors shown to influence resilience will be considered in relation to the findings of this study. Ultimately, the components of this chapter will attempt to illuminate the ways in which particular models and studies have been used to aid in the current research.

### **2.1 *Origins of the Interpersonal Model of Teacher Behavior***

The original research goal that inspired Wubbels was a desire to develop a better understanding of the teacher behaviors that could impact the classroom environment. The original problem concerned the shift in attitudes of young teachers after they had begun teaching in the classroom. The belief was that the training programs helped teachers learn progressive methods, but that once they began teaching they would often revert to traditional methods that often permitted teachers to behave in aggressive or confrontational ways (Wubbels, 1985, p. 2). Ultimately, the researchers wanted to inform teachers, especially beginning teachers, about methods they could use to establish good communication patterns and to disrupt the bad patterns with their students—all in the spirit of developing positive classroom environments.

Wubbels' team acknowledged two primary general aspects of teacher behavior. The first was the instructional-methodological aspect. In their view, this consisted of curriculum choices, classroom organization decisions, grading processes, the facilitation of the learning processes and content delivery methods. The second was the interactional aspect. In their conception, the interactional aspect is more linked to teachers as individuals than to the stylistic choices teachers make. Furthermore, it is believed that teacher's personal values, emotions and attitudes all play key roles in the development of relationships with students (Wubbels, 1985, p. 2-3).



Their initial study specifically aimed at shedding light on the communication processes between teachers and students, particularly the effect that teacher behaviors had on students' actions. They felt that if teachers understood more about the effects that their actions could potentially have on students, they would be able to better use their own behavior and personality to produce desired outcomes. The clearest motive for the model's creation was that it allowed for problematic student-teacher interpersonal relations to be reformulated as teacher focused. Wubbels and his team felt that teachers had greater capacity to change their behaviors, or at least be aware of them, than did students. Subsequently, the Wubbels team developed their model so that every interactional teacher behavior could be placed within at least one of the axes.

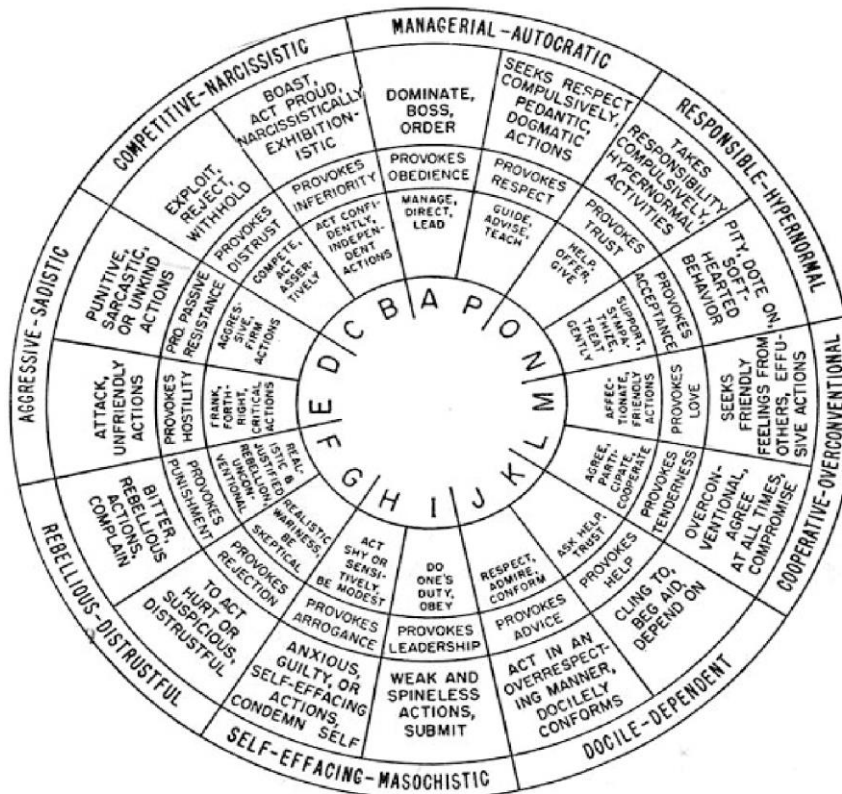
### ***2.1.1 The Leary Model of Interpersonal Behavior (1957)***

Timothy Leary's *Model of Interpersonal Behavior* (1957) served as the guide for Wubbels and his colleagues during the creation of their model which resulted in their modified version adapted to fit the school context.

Leary's model sprang from his belief that a shift in psychological literature was necessary at the time. From the outset of the study of humans in the early 1900's, there was a strong focus on the individual. Leary, and others, realized that there was a need to study the individual in relation to others (Leary, 1957, p. 3). This shift was captured by the term *Interpersonal Relations*, which was coined by Harry Stack Sullivan (Leary, 1957, p. 4). In the eyes of Leary, Interpersonal Behavior was seen as behavior that is related overtly, consciously, ethically or symbolically to another human being. From this understanding, Leary developed a detailed continuum that allowed for different behavioral mechanisms and reflexes to be categorized into eight general groups and then into sixteen more specific behavioral categories.

The figure below is Leary's representation.

**Figure 2.1:**



In Wubbels' reconceptualization of this model, many of the examples of behaviors and behavioral categorizations used are originally Leary's ideas reformulated to contextually fit for the purpose of looking at interpersonal teacher behavior.

### 2.1.2 Studies that have used Wubbels' adaptation of the model

By 2002 there were already at least fifty different studies that had used Wubbels' *Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior* (den Brok, et. al., 2002, p. 181). Of particular importance was Wubbels, Brekelmans and Levy's study (1997, p. 82-86) that produced a blueprint for an "ideal" teacher. The data that emerged was a product of the perceptions of thousands of students and teachers. The "best" teachers are strong classroom leaders who tend to be friendlier and more understanding rather than uncertain, dissatisfied or admonishing. The "best" teachers also allow their students more freedom than usual. These findings were generated using the *Interpersonal Model of Teacher Behavior* as the framework.

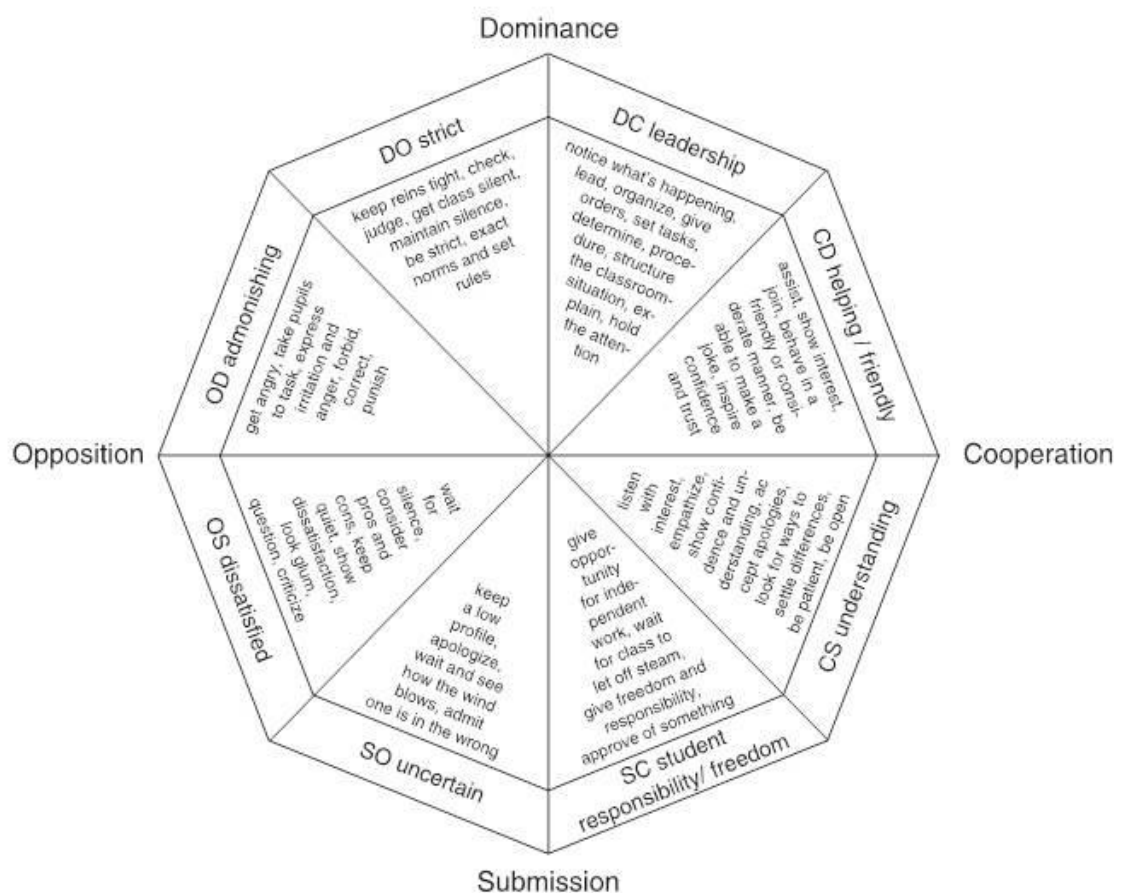
A total count of studies using this model since 2002 was not located, however it is apparent that the number has drastically increased. With this increase comes a wide-range of topics touched upon. It might be useful in future research to devise an inventory of the models' usage. For the purpose of this study I will shed light on only a few of the usages. Perhaps most common has been its application alongside the QTI (Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction), a tool that is known to help quantitatively operationalize the Wubbels model. The QTI is a questionnaire that contains sixty-four items or questions each of which belongs to one of the eight primary dimensions in the *Interpersonal Model of Teacher Behavior*. Each answer is scored on a five-point scale in which the higher the score the more often a teacher shows that behavior. One example among the many that used the QTI aimed to look at student perceptions of their High School Biology teacher's interpersonal behavior. This was undertaken so that a decision could be made about the applicability of the QTI and the Wubbels Model to this very specific subject and grade level (Fisher, Henderson, & Fraser, 1995, p. 125). Numerous other studies exist that similarly try to find out how applicable the model(s) is to specific subjects or sub-groups (den Brok, Levy, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2005, p. 21).

Often the model has been used to help answer or validate more nuanced questions or concerns. Two questions that have emerged as important are: a) How culturally universal is the Interpersonal Model for Teacher Behavior? and b) What is the relationship between teacher ideals and actual teacher interpersonal behaviors? There are many other questions that have been answered with the help of the Wubbels model, but these two are associated with particularly interesting studies. For the first question, Wubbels and Levy (1991) tried to find out if the model yielded similar results between comparable Dutch and American teachers. They found that it could indeed be applied reliably across these two cultures. Interestingly, they also found that American teachers generally wanted to be more strict than Dutch teachers. Furthermore, they revealed that Dutch teachers wanted to give more freedom to their students than did American teachers (Wubbels & Levy, 1991, p. 15). The second question relates to a discrepancy between teacher and student reports of actual behavior and their reports of ideal interpersonal teacher behavior. It was found that teacher self-reports of their actual behaviors are at least partially shaped by their conceptions of "ideal" behaviors. Furthermore, it was found that disparities in the reporting of students and teachers could be a result of teacher's wishful belief that their behavior is closer to their ideals than their students actually report (Wubbels, Brekelmans, & Hooymayers, 1992, p. 56).

The aforementioned studies are just a handful out of those that have been conducted in close proximity to, or directly using the Interpersonal Model of Teacher Behavior. I have been sure to give appropriate attention to other related studies in the readings I have done to develop an understanding of the model and its past usage and history.

## 2.2 Visual representation of the Interpersonal Model of Teacher Behavior

Figure 2.2:



## 2.3 Understanding the model

As illustrated above, this model is a framework that highlights two key dimensions that have been summarized by four axes and eight specific behavioral categorizations. The first key dimension is the *influence dimension*, which includes the Dominance and Submission axes. The second is the *proximity dimension*, which includes the Cooperation and Opposition axes.

The four aforementioned axes occupy their own points that divide the above circumplex into quarters.

Within these axes exist eight separate but equal categories. However, these sectors are obviously not randomly set within the circumplex. In fact, the closer a category is to another the more closely related are the behaviors and also the effects of those behaviors on the students within each category. For example, if a teacher listens to a student with a sincere interest in their personal situation then the effect of that teacher's behavior on the student would be closely related to the effect that would result if that same teacher were to practice confidence inspiring actions with the student (Wubbels, 1985, p. 3). This is likely to be the case within this framework because the dimensions that such behaviors are located within (respectively, *understanding and helping/friendly*) are adjoined along the border of the model. As one progresses around the model, they can see the clear progression in the hypothetical teacher behaviors in relation to the axes that they are closest to. Furthermore, as one continues around the model they will notice a set of letters assigned to each of the eight axes. For example, within the *strict* dimension the letters read "DO" which is to suggest that for behaviors assigned to this category it is likely that the *dominance* dimension will prevail over the *opposition* dimension. However, the adjoining admonishing dimension reads "OD" which suggests that such behaviors exemplify stronger resemblance to oppositional behavior than they do to dominant behavior.

Wubbels and his team conducted extensive interviews with both students and teachers to develop the behavioral examples that helped to guide the coding process of the data in this study. In addition, they also developed the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI), which helped in the creation of the model. The QTI was a 77-item questionnaire that gauged interpersonal teacher behaviors and students and teachers perceptions of such behavior. The above visual representation of the model has given me an in-depth view of the particularities of the framework that has guided my data coding process.

## **2.4    *Appropriateness of the model for this study***

Studying interpersonal behavior is important for a handful of reasons. First of all, research has documented the link between interpersonal teacher behavior and student achievement and motivation (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 1998, p. 565-580). Similarly, positive student-teacher interpersonal relationships are important for promoting learning engagement amongst

students (Brekelmans, Sleegers & Fraser, 2000, p. 237). Given that these pieces are often seen as desired outcomes of education, along with the evidence presented in the previous chapter, it can be said that studying the interpersonal behaviors of teachers is important for the consideration of student-teacher relationships and the behaviors' role in producing positive conditions for all involved.

As was briefly touched upon, this model focuses on teacher interpersonal behavior rather than student behavior. The data that was collected through the semi-structured qualitative interviews was almost entirely based on students' and teachers' reflections on the ideals and/or actual experiences with interpersonal teacher behaviors. This focus on teacher behavior meshed nicely with the Wubbels model.

Furthermore, this model gives clear categories to which behaviors can be assigned. The dimensions and the examples included within the model offer enough flexibility and also ample specificity. Generally, this model offers both the structure and the openness that I feel is necessary for the variation and complexity found in the interview data. In addition, during the coding process it was apparent that the majority of interesting and relevant sentiments that student and teachers expressed fit relatively easily into the model. For the most part, it did not seem that I was stretching the data at any point in the coding process.

Another dimension that was explored earlier was cultural influence, which in this context is important due to the wide cultural range of students and teachers in the programs. As noted, there are studies supporting the belief that data resulting from the use of this framework could be reliably generalized cross-culturally (Wubbels & Levy, 1991). Broadly, the model has been tested multiple times with positive results in terms of its reliability and validity for examining interpersonal teacher behaviors and student/teacher perceptions of interpersonal teacher behavior (Wubbels, et. al., 1991; Fisher & Rickards, 1998, p. 13).

## **2.5     *How does the model aid the data analysis process?***

The methodology chapter (Chapter Three) provides details regarding the methods used to collect, code and make sense of the data in this study. However, this brief section will shed light on how the Wubbels model was operationalized for data coding and analysis.

Following transcription of the student and teacher interviews, the coding of the interview text was initiated. As will be explained in greater detail in the methodology and findings chapters,

there were many differences in how teachers and students approached conversations about their relationships. Generally, teachers spoke in terms of strategies rather than about their own experiences. Students spoke mostly in terms of anecdotes or in hypothetical or ideal terms. Regardless, the responses were so mixed that I did not give much attention to this dimension of the data, except when it was important to do so for contextual understanding. This decision allowed for the coding process to occur without giving consideration to the tense (future, past or present) of the comments. Instead, I chose to code all behaviors, behavioral ideals and strategies together into the same data set.

The model's simultaneous broadness and specificity was extremely helpful during the coding and analysis. For example, some interview texts aligned quite closely with many of the model's examples of teacher behaviors. There were teacher behaviors that did not align directly, but using subjective judgment I was able to code them into the broader categories that the model offered. On the whole, the model has offered enough flexibility in all directions for it to be both comprehensive and useful for the analysis of the interviews.

## **2.6     *Resilience***

Currently a major concern in education is the obstacles to success that at-risk students are faced with. For those at-risk students who achieve good outcomes in spite of serious threats to their adaptation or development, the term *resilience* has been used as a label (Masten, 2001, p. 228). As was mentioned earlier, much research that looks at the experiences of at-risk students focuses on the deficits that exist in student experiences or the processes, both inside and outside of school, that are seen as detrimental to students. Resilience researchers, however, try a different approach by closely studying the experiences of at-risk students who have been found to be resilient (McMillan & Reed, 1994, p. 137).

Since the first emergence of research on resilience in 1970, there have been three primary spurts of research (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012, p. 2296). The first was primarily geared towards trying to understand and prevent the onset of psychopathology. The second wave was research on the protective factors that were associated with resilience. The third wave of research focused on the promotion of resilience in youth, specifically through the assessment and revision of policies, intervention strategies and prevention tactics. This study will operate from the perspective that resilience is a rather ordinary process and that a student is likely to fully develop and prove to be resilient if the proper processes and resources are in place. This

paper looks at the interpersonal behaviors that exist in the relationship between student and teacher. It will also look at these behaviors and how they may or may not be conducive to resilience amongst at-risk students.

### ***2.6.1 Issues in resilience research***

Embedded in the burgeoning body of research, and a consequence of it, is a great deal of ambiguity in the definitions of resilience. In 1994 Masten suggested that it is important to use *resilience* rather than *resiliency* because the latter misleadingly infers that positive adaptation is a product of a unique personal attribute, rather than a multi-dimensional process (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000, p. 547). For the sake of consistency and to avoid possible confusion, this study will use the word *resilience*, not *resiliency*. This aligns with Masten's view that resilience is an ordinary trait and that positive adaptation is often a result of the effective mobilization of the processes shown to be supportive of optimal development.

One of the most prominent issues in this strand of research is related to the definition used for resilience. There is, however, a good deal of disagreement in the literature regarding a universally accepted definition of resilience. First, there has been substantial disagreement in how to define adverse conditions or threat factors. Secondly, there is disagreement regarding how to gauge positive adjustments or adaptations (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 545). Both of these points of tension are largely dependent on the context in which they are being applied, which is relevant in resilience research because of the wide reach that the concept has achieved. Different methods have also been used to correlate risks and outcomes with each other. Some researchers have examined the individual-based factors, while others have looked at the external and protective variables that exist within the environments of individuals. This disparity in application can lead to doubts regarding whether resilience is being looked at in both, or if they are actually looking at different phenomena altogether (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 546). Regardless of these consistency concerns, one recurring theme in resilience research is that close relationships with adult figures and effective schools are both important (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 546). However, resilience research would benefit if a consensus were reached regarding definitional semantics and operational criteria (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 545-547).

Another point of contention in resilience research is how to define it. Some studies have looked at social resilience, while others have looked at academic resilience. Others have looked at both intentionally, while others neglected to define which aspect of resilience was



being examined (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 549). Since the present context is summer and/or weekend academic enrichment programs that simultaneously focus on promoting academic and character growth, it is appropriate to consider factors conducive for social and academic resilience. Furthermore, this study is looking at process-related factors—interpersonal teacher behavior and the student-teacher relationship.

### ***2.6.2 Teachers as environmental protective resources***

Resilience is perceived to be obstructed by risk factors and promoted by protective resources. The protective resources influence individual's responses to potentially negative events or experiences. Research has divided these protective resources into two over-arching personal and environmental categorizations. Personal protective resources are those internal to the individual. Environmental protective resources are those that are external to the individual: teachers, parents, peers and the like (Alva, 1991, p. 19). Numerous studies have identified teachers and their behaviors as influential in the process of promoting resilience in at-risk students (Smokowski, Reynolds & Bezruczko, 1999, p. 444). Since there is a well-established link between resilience and teacher behavior, it is appropriate to investigate the link between both exhibited and desired interpersonal teacher behaviors and factors that have been shown to be conducive to resilience in at-risk students.

### ***2.6.3 Protective resources, factors and possibilities in the Classroom Context***

Programs that effectively reduce risk and promote resilience possess three primary characteristics: they address a wide-range of factors, they occur before the risks are likely to present themselves and they address more than one context of resilience (Durlak, 1998, p. 518). However, these process-related factors must be coupled with the effective actions of educators (Morrison & Allen, 2007, p. 163). Morrison and Allen developed a framework through their belief that educators could promote resilience of at-risk students' through their day-to-day actions. Their framework looked at the "protective possibilities" available to teachers, at three different levels: the classroom level with teachers, the classroom level with peers and the school-wide level. This framework also included a family level, which for the purpose of my study this will be excluded because of lack of data collected. The table on the following page is a visual representation of the Morrison and Allen framework:

**Table I: Morrison and Allen Model (2007)**

| Characteristic         | Risk to Educational Performance   | Strengthen or Enhance Educational Adaptation   | Protective Possibilities or Actions  |
|------------------------|---|--|--|
| Autonomy               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependence</li> <li>• External Locus of Control</li> <li>• Low self-efficacy</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills</li> <li>• Self-Confidence</li> <li>• Self-responsibility</li> </ul>   | <i>Teacher/Classroom</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt learner centered practices</li> <li>• Involve students in making rules</li> </ul>  |
| Sense of Purpose       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hopeless</li> <li>• No vision of purpose</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goals</li> <li>• Positive attributions</li> <li>• Optimism</li> </ul>   | <i>Teacher/Classroom</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capitalize on student interests</li> <li>• Provide culturally relevant activities</li> <li>• Allow students to contribute their time and their talent</li> </ul> <i>School-Level</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer a variety of extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• Let students participate in planning process</li> <li>• Make available career learning opportunities</li> <li>• Provide service opportunities</li> </ul> |
| Social Competence      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor social skills</li> <li>• Lacks friends</li> <li>• Poor relationships with teachers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liked by others</li> <li>• Able to initiate positive interactions</li> <li>• Empathetic</li> <li>• Leadership skills</li> </ul> | <i>Peers/Classroom</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for students to help each other</li> <li>• Use cooperative learning strategies</li> <li>• Mix peers of varied popularity</li> <li>• Build group unity</li> </ul> <i>School-Level</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer mentors</li> <li>• Encourage students to make connections through school activities</li> </ul>   |
| Problem Solving        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impulsive Reaction</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking before acting</li> <li>• Planning Skills</li> </ul>  | <i>Teacher/Classroom</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach cognitive strategies</li> <li>• Role playing</li> </ul> <i>School-Level</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers conflict resolution program</li> </ul>   |
| Achievement Motivation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoids Failure</li> <li>• Does not try</li> <li>• Gives up</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes an effort</li> <li>• Persists</li> <li>• Positive attitude towards school</li> </ul>                                      | <i>Teacher/Classroom</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide choice</li> <li>• Provide optimal challenge</li> <li>• Decrease external incentives</li> <li>• Communicate high expectations</li> </ul>  |

In 1995 Bonnie Benard, a well-known figure in the resilience field, also identified four of the five risk and/or resilience domains that Morrison and Allen used to organize their framework. It was then hypothesized that the protective factors or possibilities could be categorized into three broader categories: caring relationships, high expectations and opportunities for participation (Benard, 1995, p. 3-4). In their framework, the “protective possibilities or actions” can all be relatively seamlessly categorized into one of Benard’s three overarching categories. These have shown to be useful in preparing for the analysis of the data in the present study.

Given the complexity of the data in this qualitative study, it is also important to highlight some more specific protective possibilities within the school climate. In 2008, Jayne Downey performed an interesting study that identified twelve primary recommendations for classroom practice that would positively influence resilience, which she then categorized into four less specific clusters. These four clusters were: student-teacher rapport, classroom climate, instructional strategies and student skills (Downey, 2008, p. 57). Through interviews with thirty-two teachers and a thorough literature review, Downey was able to provide a detailed view on resilience promoting factors. Below are the visual representations of Downey’s findings within each of the four clusters (Downey, 2008):

**Table II: Student-Teacher Rapport**

| <b>Recommendation</b>   | <b>Examples</b>  |
|---|--|
| Build healthy interpersonal relationships with students                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop strong, positive, personal relationships with students that are characterized by respect, trust, caring, and cohesiveness.</li> </ul> |
| Set and communicate high, realistic expectations for academic performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain can-do attitude.</li> <li>• Emphasize effort and success.</li> <li>• Provide support for academic success.</li> </ul>                |
| Use students’ strengths to promote high self-esteem                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build individual self-esteem by focusing on personal achievements and strengths.</li> </ul>   |

**Table III: Classroom Climate**

| <b>Recommendation</b>  | <b>Examples</b>  |
|--|--|
| Tell students that they are personally responsible for their success | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help students develop personal goals and sense of pride in accomplishments.</li> <li>• Foster development of an internal locus of control.</li> </ul> |
| Develop a meaningful, caring community                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize encouragement, trust, caring, and a sense of belonging.</li> </ul>  |
| Provide opportunities for meaningful participation                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give students purpose and responsibility for what happens in the classroom and school.</li> <li>• Value students' participation.</li> </ul>           |
| Set clear and consistent expectations of students' behavior          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain clear structure for classroom behavior (academic and social).</li> </ul>   |

**Table IV: Instructional Strategies**

| <b>Recommendation</b>                      | <b>Examples</b>  |
|--|--|
| Promote Cooperative Learning Strategies    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use learning teams with group goals and individual accountability to motivate learning.</li> </ul>                            |
| Encourage students to tutor other students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage older students to read with younger students daily.</li> <li>• Encourage advanced peers to tutor others.</li> </ul> |

**Table V: Student Skills**

| <b>Recommendation</b>   | <b>Examples</b>  |
|---|--|
| Teach transferable life skills                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social skills.</li> <li>• Conflict resolution.</li> <li>• Assertiveness skills.</li> <li>• Communication skills.</li> <li>• Problem solving.</li> <li>• Critical thinking.</li> </ul> |
| Encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage positive use of time in a variety of activities.</li> </ul>   |
| Emphasize effective literacy skills                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that students are reading and comprehending at grade level.</li> </ul>   |

Downey's recommendations were heavily used in the analysis of the interview data as they were related to resilience.

#### ***2.6.4 The Use of Resilience in the Data Analysis***

The information regarding resilience that has been presented above serves as the basis for the data analysis process, concerning this concept. Chapter Six, the discussion chapter, will consider the interpersonal teacher behaviors that were found in the present study in light of the theories and factors that have been highlighted within the resilience realm. Compared to the coding and analysis process that uses Wubbel's Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior, this part of the analysis will be more open and flexible. Furthermore, one will see that the complexities of interpersonal teacher behavior found in this study are not all necessarily related to the factors related to the promotion or the obstruction of resilience.

The next chapter will provide insights into the methods used in the data collection and analysis processes. From that point, the paper will then dive into the findings and their subsequent analysis.

## Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

### 3.1 *Quantitative Research versus Qualitative Research*

Within the social sciences exist two predominant methods of research—quantitative and qualitative. Many studies exclusively employ one or the other. However, a growing number of researchers have begun to explore the possibility of blending the two into what has become known as Mixed Methods Research (Bryman, 2012, p. 37; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2003, p. 2). Each of these three approaches possesses its own set of advantages and disadvantages. Furthermore, each also operates with its own inherent philosophical assumptions (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 2-3).

Quantitative research is often driven by primarily positivist assumptions, meaning that those employing such methods believe that probabilistic consistencies between two or more traits can exist to explain the social world. They believe that such causal explanations and patterns can be generated through the study of numbers, data sets and figures. Through rigorous research design, in which possible effects of other variables are controlled for when relations between two traits or variables are examined, quantitative researchers often judge that their findings on samples can be made generalizable to the populations from which the sample are drawn. This assumption is seen as both a particular strength, and also as a weakness of quantitative methods (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 3).

Speaking broadly, quantitative research is often deductive in nature (Bryman, 2012, p. 160-161). When using a deductive approach it is somewhat characteristic for a study plan to be decided upon a priori, emerging from pre-established theories and beliefs that they wish to examine in greater detail (Bryman, 2012, p. 160-161). Companies, governments, government offices, non-governmental organizations and other similar constituencies often rely on data that are generated through quantitative research to help inform the decisions that they make. However, many people tend to feel that the social world cannot simply be reduced to a data set developed through the collection and analysis of numerical information. Either through the addition of qualitative methods, or through the combination of both qualitative and quantitative, emerge nuanced and subject-specific explanations of similar or dissimilar social phenomena.

Qualitative research is inherently interpretive (Bryman, 2012, p. 380); in that there is an ongoing quest to understand the deeper meaning of the subjective world as a study's participants construct it (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 3). Ontologically speaking, interpretivists feel that the social world is strictly relativistic (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 3). In other words, to understand what truly happens in a particular social world one must speak at length with those who occupy it. Because qualitative researchers are sometimes labeled as constructionists and anti-realists, they typically reject the idea that social phenomena can be mind-independent. In their view, the only possible realities are the subjective views of each of the participants in their research—thus their findings are mind-dependent in nature (Trigg, 1980, p. 23).

Again broadly speaking, qualitative research tends to be mostly inductive in nature (Bryman, 2012, p. 380). When employing an inductive approach the tendency is that theories and patterns will arise from close examination of the collected data—this could be called a “bottom-up” approach to research (Bryman, 2012, p. 26). Often the researcher finds that their research questions and research problems shift as they collect their data. An approach may then become reflexive and places the researcher at the forefront of the data collection and interpretation process, in that their individual meaning-making processes become magnified (Bryman, 2012; p. 399). The researcher(s) is a human being(s) who supposedly has a deep understanding of the topic under investigation and during the research process the element of the human touch can be helpful in creating meaning of different data, especially when the human touch is from a so-called ‘expert’. However, questions of validity and reliability also arise when such a high degree of responsibility is given to a human being who is undoubtedly still influenced by their own interpretive biases (Bryman, 2012, p. 399-400).

With all of this being said, it is important to note that the aforementioned traditions in social science research may be a bit narrow in their scope. Of course quantitative research is often deductive, but it can also be inductive at certain junctures of the process. For example, when data collected reveal that the a priori theories that guided a study's initial research design are not as was once thought, the process of seeking alternative causal theories is actually inductive. Similarly, while qualitative research is often inductive, it often needs to be deductive at the onset so that the appropriate methods for the particular study can be employed. Moreover, the philosophical assumptions that are associated with research designs are not fixed in nature. As Gibbons (1994, p. 22) has put it, “In mode 2 knowledge

production...knowledge produced does not follow traditional disciplinary criteria.” Gibbons summarizes this shift by suggesting that the tendency in scientific research is to reject that there are singular, discipline-based ways to conduct research. Mode 2 research is contextually applied, even if the methods employed do not align with the field-based traditions (Gibbons, et. al., 1994, p. 2-3). Summarily, it would be limiting to suggest that the delineations in the paragraphs preceding this are anything more than traditions in research design.

This particular study aims to provide its audience with an understanding of the relationship dynamics that exist between students and teachers within summer and weekend academic enrichment programs that enroll underserved students from traditionally low-income backgrounds. By closely examining interview transcriptions an attempt is made to shed light on how such relationships contribute to the creation of conditions that lead to resilience in these at-risk students. The following section will defend the choice of qualitative research methods in this study.

### **3.2     *Why Qualitative Research Methods for this study?***

After considering the aforementioned characteristics of research design, the decision was made to implement a qualitative research project. This study’s goal is to attempt to analyze the interpersonal behaviors that exist within the student-teacher relationship in the context of three summer and weekend academic enrichment programs for underserved students.

According to Timothy Leary (1957, p. 8), the human body is never free from interpersonal tensions. Every action that a human being completes is driven by something social or interpersonal. For example; when a student chooses to fully commit themselves to an assignment in school their motivation for doing so could be any number of reasons. Perhaps they do so because it will make their parents happy, maybe it is because they want to earn higher marks to achieve admissions to their University of choice so that they will receive a degree from a University that gives them an advantage over others, maybe they do so to impress a classmate with their raw intellectual ability—it could be anything, but it may not be conducive to reduce the study of a social situation or social choice to a set of numbers.

Similar principles hold true for student-teacher relationships, it would be limiting to reduce such a complex interaction to a set of numbers derived from observational or detached methods. Similarly, however, even qualitative methods that tend to generate detailed and verbose responses from participant do not provide whole descriptions for complex context-dependent phenomena.



A relationship is a conglomeration of social or human actions that can only be understood properly if studied within a context that the inquirer can use their expertise and position to better understand. Additionally, the researcher must be able to make meaning of the participants' day-to-day experiences to have any chance of reliably interpreting or making meaning of their actions (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). Thus, to do the complexity of human relationships justice, a researcher must employ methods that allow for close examination of the system in which the relationship is situated. This can primarily be achieved through a qualitative research design that emphasizes close proximity between the researcher and the subject. As this study attempts to look at relationships through the perceptions of different individuals within said relationships, it is critical to capture their feelings, beliefs, thoughts and emotions. Without this information, a multi-faceted understanding of a relationship could not be adequately constructed.

In 2003, Heather Davis authored a sizeable review of the methodological and the theoretical perspectives that have dominated the literature on student-teacher relationships. Through this review, Davis identified three approaches that have been most prevalent in such research. She argues that researchers have studied student-teacher relationships from the following conceptions; attachment perspectives, motivational perspectives and sociocultural perspectives.

Research within the attachment perspective is launched from the belief that the student-teacher relationship is an extension of the parent-child relationship. Consequently, researchers are interested in examining dimensions of the parent-child relationship (i.e. emotional closeness, conflict, dependency and adjustment) and applying them to the student-teacher relationship context. Furthermore, from this perspective it is believed that students bring individual relational beliefs that have been shaped by their experiences with previous primary or ancillary caregivers into the relationships they hold with their teachers (Bowlby, 2008, p. 87). Thus studies situated within the attachment perspective tend to be based on observational and self-report data collected in a slightly more detached research style.

Motivation researchers focus primarily on trying to understand how classroom contexts and social motivational beliefs act to shape relationships and motivations to learn. In doing so, they often tend to place the teacher and their actions at the center of attention. Such a decision is made because the teacher is presumed to bring his or her own beliefs and personality to the classroom, which in turn shapes the context of the classroom. Consequently, their

methodology typically takes an interpretivist approach in which everything is contextually situated. Motivational studies take this path because they feel that relationships are context-dependent with regards to institutional constraints, instructional beliefs, identification level with school and social motivational beliefs (Davis, 2003, p. 224).

Lastly, the sociocultural perspective can, in fact, endorse both the attachment and motivational perspectives (Davis, 2003, p. 217). This perspective, though, decidedly recognizes that individuals cannot be separated from their classroom or school contexts (Cobb, 1996, p. 19). From this perspective, researchers often try to look deeper at relationships as embedded within particular classroom environments, which in turn are embedded within different schools and further also embedded within different communities (Goldstein, 1999, p. 654). This is driven by a desire to look at relationships as dynamics that transcend the simple give and take between a teacher and student. In most instances, researchers taking this perspective support the “multiple truths” perspective and employ inductive, qualitative research methods. At the core, this is because they view relationships as dynamic, constantly shifting and culturally underpinned (Davis, 2003, p. 224-225).

This study will attempt to triangulate the three perspectives, and in doing so it acknowledges that each approach holds significant merit. By accepting that the three perspectives are connected, but also unique, it would allow for methodology to advance and for new concepts to emerge through the inherently reflexive nature of such a triangulation (Mathison, 1988, p. 13). It also accepts the multi-faceted nature of relationships, meaning that it is unlikely that a single perspective approach could adequately and wholly shed light on a subject as complex as a human relationship (Davis, 2003, p. 227).

The preceding sections have outlined the basic reasons for which a qualitative research design was chosen. The proceeding sections will attempt to provide clarity on the particularities of the research process and set-up.

### **3.3     *Research Design***

Every researcher must enter the data collection and analysis process with, at the very least, a rough plan as to how the process will move along. With the availability of many different potential research designs, it is important to select the particular design that best fits with research goals, research questions, the audience, the environmental context and with the

means and abilities of the researcher. From this design framework often emerge particular instruments and methods that are appropriate for data collection

At its core, this project is a case study. It seeks to deeply investigate the individual experiences and perceptions of the actors within a particular program or organization. The original plan was to recruit a large sample size of both teachers and students from a particular enrichment program, however it quickly became clear that the recruitment of an adequate sample size would be troublesome within the context of only a single program. For this reason, an effort was made to recruit additional programs that would agree to participation in the research. Ultimately two programs participated in the study, which to an extent could have made this a comparative case study. However, comparisons will not be made between the two participating programs. The decision to study two similar programs was made to widen the participant pool. Still, though, attention will be given to the obvious variation in sociocultural contexts. Furthermore, it is important to clarify that the research methods employed were as consistent as possible between the two cases.

The following sections will provide the particulars of the studies' design. A notation will be made in the case that a particularity of the design differs between the two cases.

### **3.4    *Sampling***

The following sub-sections will explain the details of the sample and the acquisition of the sample.

#### **3.4.1   *Sample Acquisition***

Generally, sampling exists at two levels: the contextual and the participant levels (Bryman, 2012, p. 417). For the contextual level of this study, decisions had to be made on the selection of programs from which participants would be sampled. The process of selecting programs was purposive in nature. Given the particularities of the study, efforts were targeted at contacting programs that offered supplementary summer and weekend academic enrichment programming to underserved middle school students.

Given my professional experiences, I had a general knowledge of the types of programs that might be good fits. Furthermore, I had geographic and financial constraints that limited potential participant programs to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the northeast region

of the United States. Once I identified the six programs I wished to contact, an initial email was sent giving a brief explanation of my study and the role that the program could potentially play in the research. Of the six programs contacted, only two responded positively. Both program directors and I established a rapport through brief conversations explaining different elements of the study and how I could efficiently and appropriately collect data from their students and teachers. These pre-study conversations did not confound my data because program administrators were not key participants in the study.

At the participant level, the recruitment process differed slightly between the two participating programs. For both programs, though, student participants were under the age of 18 so it was necessary to obtain parental consent before allowing for their participation. This necessity made the acquisition of participants significantly more difficult. For Program #1, the program director sent group emails to the teacher and parents email list-servs. These emails were drafted by me and included the appropriate consent forms (see appendix section), but were sent from the program director's email. This was done because I thought that the email would be better received if it came from an individual that they knew and trusted. All responses were forwarded along to me. If a positive response came from a teacher, I emailed with them to arrange for a mutually agreeable time for the interview to occur. If a positive response came from a parent I would respond saying that the interview would take place at a Saturday program meeting and that I would need to obtain the signed consent form before the interview could take place.

For Program #2, the exact same was done except that the initial email came from me rather than the program director. Furthermore, due to a low percentage of parents who had email access I had to call families without email addresses to explain the study and answer any questions they had. In addition, many parents were unable to understand how to re-attach the consent forms to the email, so the program director suggested that I attend an event at a local science center that the parents would be attending. At this program, I was able to obtain consent forms from a handful of parents.

In the end, it was extremely difficult to obtain consent forms from both students and teachers alike. Because of this obstacle, a decision was made to interview every student and teacher that returned the consent form. If this decision had not been made, the sample size would not have been large enough. In total, Program #1 produced eight consent forms from

parents/students and three consent forms from teachers. Program #2 yielded seven consent forms from parents/students and two consent forms from teachers.

### **3.4.2 *Who constitutes the sample?***

Both programs are operated by private independent schools and enroll students from public, magnet and charter schools in their surrounding communities. Additionally, both programs exclusively enroll students that are between the ages of 11 and 15. Students within this age range are most often enrolled in grades 6, 7, 8 or 9. I entered the study hoping to have a participant pool large enough to sort, at least to some degree, with relation to age. This might have been fitting since there exist differences in developmental stages across the student participating in the study. However, it became evident that this would not be possible because of weak response rates from potential participants. Regardless, some attempt will be made to account for this variable when it is appropriate.

In addition to students, a total of five teachers were interviewed. All five of these teachers were full-time instructors at the independent schools at which the programs under study were situated. Similar to the student sample, response rates were low to the initial request, which meant that each responding teacher was to be interviewed.

As a means of framing and contextualizing the study, an interview was conducted with each program director. This information has not been coded or used in the findings, but it has been used to provide necessary contextual information to help me make sense of any program-specific pieces of information that would otherwise be unclear to me.

## **3.5 *Data Collection***

The following sub-sections will explain the methods used to collect the data that have informed the findings chapter of this thesis.

### **3.5.1 *Interviewing***

The primary data collection tool was semi-structured qualitative interviewing. Semi-structured interviews tend to have a pre-set list of topics that the researcher hopes to cover. However, the way that the interviewer asks their questions usually gives the interviewee a good deal of flexibility in choosing the way in which they respond (Bryman, 2012, p. 471).

This approach to question asking gives the interviewee an element of familiarity and comfort, which can, in turn, lend conditions favorable to obtaining detailed and uninhibited responses.

Given that two separate programs were under study, it was important to design an interview guide (see appendix) that could be used for both. Without at least some degree of consistency, it would be difficult to use each interview in the same data set (Bryman, 2012, p. 472).

Regardless, the inherent nature of semi-structured interviewing suggests that each interview will likely head in the direction that results from the cognitive contextual interpersonal negotiations of the interviewer and interviewee. As a result, the interviews undertaken in this study were consistent in terms of topics covered, but varied in how the topics were broached.

Criticism of employing only semi-structured interviews as the data collection tool may be valid. However, time constraints and consent issues prevented the collection of observational data. If I were to have attempted to add classroom observations to add to my findings on student-teacher relationships, surely some useful data may have been generated. However, semi-structured interviews allow for detailed study of the perspectives on relationships of both students and teachers. Ultimately, my goal is to produce data that highlights the first-hand views of students and teachers on their relationships with each other.

### ***3.5.2 Interview Particularities***

For the student sample in program #1, all participants were interviewed on Saturday mornings in an empty classroom on the campus of the independent school that runs the program. Students who had completed the necessary consent forms were individually taken from their classes for 20-30 minutes to participate in the interview. I placed an audio recorder on the table between participant and me after receiving permission from them.

For the student sample in program #2, the participants were interviewed at various times agreed upon via phone and email beforehand. All interviews were conducted in the library facility at the independent school that runs the program. Using the library offered families and students a familiar location to engage in a conversation with an unfamiliar researcher. Similar to program #1, an audio recorder was also placed between the interviewer and the interviewee.

The teachers sampled from both program #1 and #2 were interviewed at mutually agreed upon times that were arranged via email exchanges. All five interviews were conducted on the campuses (three occurred in private classrooms, two transpired in semi-private meeting spaces) of the independent school at which they teach. An audio recorder was used to log the interview proceedings.

### **3.6     *Field Work Reflections***

The preceding sections of this chapter have periodically touched upon some of the experiences in the field. However, these comments have largely been limited to methodological designs and considerations. The proceeding section will provide a bit more information on my experiences in the field.

On September 7<sup>th</sup>, I returned to my home state of Massachusetts after completing the Research Proposal course in Oslo. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of September I began the fieldwork process with a meeting with the director of what would become program #1. Just a few days later, I was able to partake in a meeting with the director of what would soon become program #2. Both of these meetings were crucial in getting my research off of the ground.

To me it seems that their receptiveness to my study was largely a product of both directors being data savvy individuals. Throughout each meeting there were multiple mentions of a need to better inform their decisions with data derived from academic research. Furthermore, both expressed intrigue about my study being less focused on outcomes, and more on process related factors. The existing literature base on academic enrichment and college access programs appears to be largely quantitative and focused on outcomes of students.

Both programs eventually agreed to be part of my study, though both directors expressed the sentiment that they had very busy schedules and that I would have to spearhead the majority of the work that needed to be done to get my study moving. Regardless, both directors were instrumental in helping me select the ideal methods for recruiting the highest number of participants possible. Generally, their enthusiasm and willingness was a personal motivator and reinforcement of the relevance of my research.

In conversations and communications with parents it seemed that, for the most part, they trusted me as a researcher and did not quite understand why they needed to sign anything. This was indicative of the general accepting attitude that people had. Even then, parents

seemed to be very busy and were likely just forgetting to sign the consent papers. The director of program #1 commented on how she almost “felt bad for the number of documents that parents already had to sign” and that mine was just another in the myriad of communications they receive. Still, my efforts to recruit participants was not lackluster, but still balanced enough so as not to alienate myself by appearing to be overbearing or too persistent.

Once all of the consent forms were collected and interviews were arranged, the process was relatively straightforward and contained very few surprises or issues. Perhaps the most surprising (and unsurprising) aspect of the interviewing process was that the conversations with students were rather basic and general in nature. As I progressed through my student interviews, I was constantly re-evaluating my tactics and demeanor as an interviewer. This was essential because building trust and comfort were important in getting the students to open up to me. I often felt like the students were nervous because they did not quite understand what a researcher actually does. There seemed to be a feeling that their conversations with me had some sort of bearing on their standing as a student within the program. Thus, it was essential that as much clarity and comfort was brought to the interview setting as possible.

The teachers, on the other hand, seemed rather comfortable with the interviews. They understood that I was a master student and that my aim was not to expose them or their program. This resulted in robust conversations that yielded great data to incorporate into my data analysis, and eventually my findings. Of course, I wish that there were a larger sample of teachers, but I think that since they were busy with work, my project was, understandably, a bit of an afterthought.

The final interview for this project was completed in mid-November of 2013. Overall, the fieldwork process was relatively painless and was met with very little opposition or skepticism.

### **3.7     *Data Transcription***

The transcription of interviews was an ongoing process throughout the interviewing that took place in the autumn of 2013. Using my password-protected interview recorder, I downloaded all interviews to a password-protected audio player on my computer. From this audio player, I was able to replay each of the twenty-one interviews for the purpose of transcribing them



word-for-word. This process was extremely time-consuming and tedious, but necessary to fully grasp the whole meaning of each respondent's beliefs (Bryman, 2012, p. 486).

### **3.8     *Data Coding***

This process began after the interviews were fully transcribed. Using Wubbels' Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior, all interviews were parsed through to identify behaviors, strategies or philosophies that were relevant in the context of student-teacher relationships. Each behavior was identified and then categorized into the appropriate dimension of the Wubbels model. Apart from the obvious contextual considerations, this process was conducted in nearly identical fashions for student and teacher interviews. Despite this study being qualitative, I still chose to perform a final count of behaviors in each behavioral dimension, primarily so that a cursory understanding of where behavioral reports tend to fall within. One can see from the differences in the totals revealed in the findings section, that there is a clear trend to avoid reporting particular behaviors amongst students and teachers.

### **3.9     *Discarding of Questionnaire Data***

At the dawn of this study, one of the goals was to ascertain what sort of differences existed in the relationships between students and teachers, specifically between and amongst students with differing levels of academic self-concepts. The questionnaire ended up yielding negligible and insignificant differences on my measurement scale. For this reason, the questionnaires that were collected have not been used in the actual write-up of this research study.

## **Chapter Four: Findings**

The following sections will present the findings from the interviews conducted during my fieldwork period.

The interviews conducted during the fieldwork period have been coded with Theo Wubbels' *Model For Interpersonal Teacher Behavior* as the guiding framework for the categorization of the behaviors and perspectives of the teachers and students that participated in my study. The aforementioned framework will also assist in organizing the presentation of the findings. Furthermore, for the purpose of clearly highlighting the perspectives and experiences of teachers and students, the findings for both will be presented separately. In the discussion chapter, which will immediately follow the data presentation, the data will be mixed to illustrate the implications of the findings.

I have made the decision to begin my findings section by examining the experiences and perspectives of the five teachers that participated in my study. If we are able to better understand how these teachers frame their pedagogical, interpersonal and relational philosophies, we will have a more contextualized lens with which we can look at the relationship experiences and perspectives of their students.

### **4.1 Teacher Interviews**

The following sections will detail themes that are evident within each dimension of interpersonal teacher behavior across the five teacher interviews.

#### **4.1.1 Leadership Dimension**

Below I will explain the themes that emerged most often within the Leadership Dimension. As was explained in Chapter Two, behaviors that fit into this part of the interpersonal model are similar or related to; *noticing what is happening, leading, organizing, giving orders, setting tasks, determining procedures, structuring the classroom situation, explaining and holding students' attention*. The semi-structured nature of my interviews has not allowed for instances of such behavior to arise in a nature that directly aligns with the aforementioned indicators of *leadership*. However, I have done my best to fairly categorize certain behaviors into the most fitting dimension of interpersonal behavior.

A particular behavior that was consistently identified as important by the teachers sampled was an ability to **structure the classroom culture**. Two of the three teachers in program #1 felt that it was important to establish a structure and culture within the classroom. One teacher commented,

*“Sometimes there can be classroom management issues....I don’t encounter them very often, but I am much more cognizant of setting up structures...explicit expectations of how to think about how to act in the classroom....and I spend one or two days on that at the beginning of every summer to make sure that classroom culture is tight.”*

Another teacher from program #1 extended this sentiment,

*“Sort of what I need to control in the class is different...the kids are younger...in particular, we care a lot about classroom behavior...just to work on study skills, the academic skills are there, but they are secondary.”*

Both teachers proceed to explain that developing a structure and a culture within a classroom is necessary for the effective transmission of knowledge between teacher and student. A teacher from program #2 felt that part of the teacher’s role was to establish behavioral expectations for their students. This teacher suggested that the students come from a “different world” and trying to get them to understand the culture of the program is important for their ability to achieve success. Ultimately, teacher’s reported feeling that it is important to set a consistent culture and explicit expectations for how their students should behave in the classroom, since the structure determines the ease with which relevant knowledge is transmitted.

One teacher in both program #1 and also program #2 emphasized the importance of **integrity and authenticity** in their approaches to teaching and relationship building. The teacher from program #1 felt that his *authenticity* in the eyes of his students would grow if they were consistently reminded of the values guiding the program’s culture. Furthermore, the teacher from program #2 commented, “If I have a rule, no matter who it is, I’m going to hold it. But in the end they respect that. So, living by that keeps that relationship positive.” Both of these teachers can agree that **consistency** is important for upholding authenticity in a relationship, but it is likely that their definitions of integrity are not strictly internally defined, they are also

guided by the expectations and cultural particularities of the program at which they teach. Similarly, for students, the reception and articulation of integrity must be contextualized beyond the scope of the program. For example, one student may interpret a teacher's attempt to establish integrity and authenticity as an example of strict teacher behavior, while a student from a different background may interpret this as a clear form of leadership behavior. However, given the aims of both programs and the spirit with which such views were explained, it is most fitting to categorize these behaviors as befitting of leadership.

There are many ways that a teacher can establish and maintain their role as a leader in the eyes of their students. Teachers from both program #1 and program #2 identified that it is important to ***be realistic with students***. One teacher explained, *«They (students) tend to see things as very black and white, there is success and there is failure and there's very little room in between. So I have to help them navigate between those two different extremes.»* Another teacher similarly added, *“You must be realistic, but in a way that says ‘you aren’t going to be the top student’ but still encouraging.”* Through these sentiments, both teachers voiced a view that it is important to be realistic with students by setting attainable goals and proper expectations. Generally, they believe that students prefer the truth above undeserved praise or unfitting expectations. In addition, teachers have indicated that it is important ***balance positive and critical feedback*** for their students. A teacher from program #1 said, *“Also, you want to find balance with your praise of them because you want it to be significant when you do choose to praise them.”* A teacher from program #2 holds a similar view on the importance of balancing feedback for students, *“I gain respect from a student when I give them a compliment and I know I can get that back when I need to, like if they don’t do well on a test and I know I need to be hard on them for a day, I know I can get that pulled back without damaging the relationship.”* For a teacher to be able to enact these strategies, it is important that they possess a sort of relational expertise to better understand which interpersonal behaviors might resonate the most with their pupils.

For a teacher to offer their students deserved praise that ultimately might lead to the establishment of a teacher's authenticity and to a held feeling that the teacher is a leader, it is crucial that they ***pay close attention to the smaller improvements of their students***. One teacher from program #1 offered this strategy,

*“...like providing visual trackers of how I did on quiz...so I might start out with a 63/D and when that goes up to a 68/70 I can then say, “look, you’re on the*

*right track". I think that this can be a process for helping students realize that they aren't in this rut of being a bad writer."*

Another teacher from program #1 felt similarly, *"It's really important to pay attention to any, even small, level of success for these students. I really want to point it out so that they know that I'm paying attention and then also to put these students in situations where you know that they will experience success so that they begin to develop a sense of their own competence."* If a teacher is paying attention to what is happening for individual students, those students are likely to perceive such efforts as indicative of a teacher who is a leader in the sense that they are aware of the goings-on inside their classroom. A teacher from program #1 noted, *"You know, I think our kids come from environments where they are one of many and are not always noticed for their individual selves."*, giving further support to the notion that individual attention is important.

For a teacher to be recognized as a leader by their students they would be wise to respect their students so as to receive respect in return. A commonly reported aspect of respect reported by the teachers sampled was that it is important ***not to waste the time of their students***. On the whole, the teachers felt that their students truly want to learn and use their time at the summer program productively. A teacher from program #2 commented, *"In general I think kids come into the room and respect that they aren't just here to chill."* After all, the students enrolled have made an intentional choice to spend a good portion of their summer with the enrichment program. One of the most disrespectful things that a teacher could do is waste the time of the students by repeating things they have already covered or let low expectations drive their curriculum design and delivery. The same teacher from program #2 iterated during the interview that respecting the time of the student is crucial, *"...that you cannot waste their time. As much as kids say they like teachers who are always digressing, most kids really respect you if you don't waste their time."* Furthermore, a teacher from program #1 suggested that it is important not to waste time, in general, because the summer is already an abbreviated session. When a teacher is able to effectively utilize the time that they have with their students they are showcasing their efficiency in setting and then exacting classroom procedures.

Sometimes leadership behaviors can be implicitly present, primarily when teachers take the time behind the scenes to ***educate themselves on best practices*** through perusing research relevant to the profession of teaching. A teacher from program #2 specifically mentioned that they pay attention to research on *"brain theory and growth mindset"* so that they are better

able to understand the developmental theories that apply to their students. This teacher felt that keeping up-to-date with this line of research is instrumental in how they choose to approach their relationships with students. We will see in an upcoming section of this chapter, that teachers feel that it is important to know more about the *backgrounds of their students* and also about the *communities their students come from*. Part of being an attentive leader is contextualizing relationships, performance levels and interpersonal behaviors. For example, a teacher from program #1 displayed an awareness and sensitivity to such issues,

*“They (program students) don’t have the opportunity to attend a school with small classes, they don’t have the same opportunity to develop relationships with their teachers, they don’t have the opportunity to enrich their experiences with extra-curricular activities, or to take trips to places where learning takes place explicitly and implicitly....and (this program) begins to close that gap.”*

Furthermore, teachers also reported that they should be fully aware of the aims of the program they are teaching in, as they guide the decisions that teachers make. If a teacher is able to integrate research on best practices with an awareness of the aims of the program, as well as the social issues facing their students and the individual situations of their students, they would likely be implementing relevant and appropriate tactics—a sign of a classroom leader.

The aforementioned findings were those reported by multiple teachers who were in relative agreement about the relevance of the particular thematic findings. Of course, each teacher was driven by individual philosophies. On the whole, the five teachers sampled had a total of thirty-seven (37) behaviors or philosophies categorized into the leadership dimension. As we will see, leadership is the most frequently referred to dimension through the conversations with teachers. Needless to say, leadership behaviors are instrumental in the strategies of these teachers.

#### **4.1.2 Helping/Friendly Dimension**

Below I will explain the themes that emerged most often within the Helping/Friendly Dimension. As was explained in Chapter Two, behaviors that fit into this part of the interpersonal behavior model are similar or related to; *assisting, showing an interest, joining in with students, behaving in a friendly and considerate manner, inspiring confidence and trust and an ability to make jokes with the students*. The semi-structured nature of my

interviews has not allowed for instances of such behavior to arise in a nature that directly aligns with the aforementioned indicators of *being friendly and/or helpful*. However, I have done my best to fairly categorize certain behaviors into the most fitting dimension of interpersonal behavior.

A particular behavior that some teachers in my sample identified as important was an ability to **establish rapport** with students. A teacher from program #1 commented, *“An ability to establish a rapport and trust with students is probably the most important. I think that you can have a doctorate and have all the content mastery in the world, but if there is not a rapport established that nurtures learning, then nothing will happen.”* This teacher, and also a few others believe that teachers and students must be in synch with each other before learning can occur. A teacher from program #2 detailed their views on the importance of building a rapport with students, *“It’s always been said that kids at this age begin to look for connections first before they can grow and learn. Whereas later, when you get to high school and college, it isn’t always about your connection with the teacher, it’s about the content.”* This teacher also feels strongly that being in synch with their students is a pre-condition for the establishment of rapport. Part of the process of building rapport in a relationship is **continuing to revisit relationships** with students. When asked about the qualities that teachers in the program should possess, one teacher from program #1 suggested that program directors *“should place an emphasis on hiring teachers who can quickly build rapport with students.”* Since the nature of such programs is that they meet relatively infrequently, it is important that the teachers can quickly establish rapport. However, a few teachers expressed that long lasting rapport takes additional effort, for example a teacher from program #1 said,

*“It’s not about having one conversation and saying, “okay, I’ve made that one point of contact”. It’s about revisiting that relationship and coming back to the students. It’s that willingness to continue going back to that student. I think it’s a level of persistence you need to drive things out of the student.”*

One teacher, in particular, highlighted their belief that this rapport is best established in small classes. Others believe that doing so requires full commitment and innate ability as a relationship builder.

Obviously smaller classes will be conducive to building relationships, however, teachers have offered many other perspectives within this helping/friendly domain, namely **occupying the**

**role model position.** In fact, four of the five teachers interviewed mentioned the importance of being a role model or mentor figure. A teacher in program #1 felt very strongly about this, *“I feel that at (program #1) I am more pressured to provide a positive role model and have more of an impact on them than I do with students at (independent school).”* A teacher from program #2 continued, *“in this program I felt like less of a teacher and more of a mentor, I wasn’t as much directing them or ever disciplining them in any way, shape or form. It was more earning their trust.”* Interestingly, this teacher illuminated the importance of **gaining the trust of their students**. It would be understandably difficult for a teacher to occupy a role model position without being trusted by their students. In fact, a teacher from program #1 highlighted the potential benefits of a student trusting them, *“They (middle school students) are more trusting from the outset.. I think it allows me to dive in and start challenging them a lot more quickly. They will say, “okay, I trust this person.”*

Part of the process of building the trust of students is making sure that students know you are *interested in their success*, or lack thereof. As I showed a bit earlier, it is indicative of leadership when a teacher notices a student’s success or failure. However, a helping/friendly behavior pattern would entail the teacher going a step further through **showing an individual interest** in their students. A teacher from program #1 laid this out for me, *“(Program) carves out a lot of time to allow teachers to get to know their students in a lot of different arenas, whether it is hanging out in the classroom, hanging out by the pool, study hall, free time.”* A teacher from program #2 similarly added,

*“It is important with kids like this, just to know that you’re able to ask them how their day was, what sports do you play, how was that game...remembering those things because that carries such a weight...and then they are willing to work for you cause they have that respect...you have to live it and get experience to understand how that works. That’s one of the most important things to get anywhere.”*

Furthermore, another teacher from program #1 said that he has a system based on recognizing individuals, *“It becomes a way of individually recognizing effort, trying to make students realize that we are looking at them as individuals and I think they really enjoy that and it goes into maintaining that relationship.”* For these teachers, they are all, in their own way, showing an interest in the individual interests and successes of their students.



Effectively showing an interest in one's students necessitates many different interpersonal behaviors. One of these is the ability of a teacher to harness their own humor and relate it back to their students. In fact, all five teachers interviewed expressed that **shared humor** is crucial to relationship development. A teacher from program #2 explained how they use humor to affect students,

*"Your level of humor, you use that to engage kids. With middle school students, you have embrace and then harness their energy and then push them forward. Maybe with a little humor to keep it going, or to deflect it. Like sometimes I have a running joke with kids, some kid does something and then they're all waiting for me to jump in with that joke."*

Another teacher from program #1 felt similarly, *"I think relationally it is important to figure out what sorts of humor they get and don't get. Until you start working with middle school kids, you do not really understand."* Apart from sharing humor, a teacher can also **utilize shared interests** that they have with their students. One teacher from program #2 suggested that it is important for teachers to figure out how to like some of the things that the kids do. This same teacher also felt that it is important for teachers to figure out how to get the kids interested in what the teachers are interested in. This teacher actually uses this to gauge what level the relationship is at in the kids' mind, *"When they start wanting to be involved with what you like, that's when you know you are in the positive zone."* One way to authentically share interests with students is for the teacher to actually **join in with the students**. Two of the teachers reported actually joining in on games with the students. Another teacher reported that it is important to experience mistakes alongside their students.

Both teachers from program #2 felt that mutual respect between teachers and students was worth mentioning. Moreover, all five teachers seemed to place greater importance on their own actions rather than the actions of their students. Each teacher expressed the belief that **caring for their students** was of high importance, and that it was the teacher's actions that determined that nature of caring. For example, a teacher from program #1 added, *"I think it helps to get them to know that I care about them in an outside of classroom fashion. I want them to understand that when I nag them I'm not just doing it because I'm a cranky old person, I'm doing it because I care."* Some of the teachers commented on the skepticism of the students—suggesting that the students in their programs are sometimes a bit unsure of

why the teachers care so much about them. On the whole, they felt that it was their job to be persistent in demonstrating behaviors consistent with the act of caring.

The aforementioned findings were those reported by multiple teachers who were, to a degree, in agreement about the relevance of the particular thematic findings. Of course, each teacher was driven by individual philosophies. On the whole, the five teachers sampled had a total of thirty-six (36) behaviors or philosophies categorized into the helping/friendly dimension. Moreover, it is rather apparent that teachers see the value in employing interpersonal behaviors that are within this dimension.

#### **4.1.3 Understanding Dimension**

The following section will shed light on the themes that emerged most often within the Understanding Dimension. As was explained in Chapter Two, behaviors that fit into this part of the interpersonal behavior model are similar or related to; *listening with an interest, showing confidence, showing understanding, empathizing, accepting apologies from students, seeking ways to settle differences with students, being patient and being open to others and their feelings and ideas*. The semi-structured nature of my interviews has not allowed for instances of such behavior to arise in a nature that directly aligns with the aforementioned indicators of being *understanding*. However, I have done my best to fairly categorize certain behaviors into the most aligned dimension of interpersonal behavior.

Each of the five teachers included in this study shared the view that ***being empathetic*** to the situations of their students is an important aspect of the educational process. For one teacher from program #1, their empathy extended to their student's simple decision to choose to enroll in the voluntary program in the first place,

*"I think there is also the element of it being a non-regular season for school. These kids dedicate their summer to come in. I think you want to teach them in a way that sort of rewards them for spending their summer (at the program), but at the same time you must hold them to a level of integrity and expectation. It's sort of a delicate balance between emphasizing things that are important (academic content and personal growth) and at the same time we must reward them for doing something that the majority of their peers are not doing."*

Another teacher from program #1 described what sort of impact their awareness of their student's situations can have,

*"I think our (summer program) students usually have stories that at times can be very emotional (for the teachers). They have often faced much greater adversity than the kids I teach during the school year (at the independent school). That creates all sorts of emotions and/or actions amongst the teachers. Anything from extra leniency or a sense of pity, to a sensitivity to not having enough food to eat the night before, but then not being really upset the next morning when the student doesn't have their homework."*

However, with that being said, a teacher from program #2 commented,

*"I think with empathy it is hard because not only can I not really understand what these kids are going through, I just really do not know. I do not know who is poor and who is not, I do not know who had breakfast this morning, whose mother is a drug addict...like I really did not know. If kids are not reading or are not focusing or whatever it is that is frustrating me, I would like to think "this kid has this going on" I really did not know, so I just had to imagine. It could just be that they are a pain in the butt. So it is sort of hard to develop empathy for a situation that you are not really aware of."*

Earlier in our conversation, when asked about essential skills for teaching in the summer program, this same teacher from program #2 identified empathy as crucial. This teacher went on to elaborate by providing some anecdotal evidence,

*"Empathy. Because you might think you know where they are coming from, but maybe not. (Program Director) once told me about a girl in the program who was living in a car. I think it is hard for people like you and me (myself) to really understand what it is that is causing these kids to lose focus. Maybe its undiagnosed ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) or maybe it is because they did not have enough food at home. But in terms of their hierarchy of needs you just did not really know what was going on. Like one kid was always having a hard time focusing and their mother had a baby on their 12<sup>th</sup> birthday and they had to walk to and from school alone. It was just hard because the home situation was fuzzy."*

*(The student) got there as early as we would allow and would stay until we kicked (the student) out at four o'clock."*

For one of the teachers from program #1, it was seen as imperative for all summer program teachers to truly understand that there is an opportunity gap that exists for their students. This teacher highlighted the need for empathy, *"I think our teachers really need to be relationship oriented, to be empathetic people. I think they have to have the desire to work with low-income populations. And to really understand that students who come from low-income populations really just have not had the same types of opportunities."* On the whole, all of the teachers in the sample displayed a keen support for the importance of empathy in the student-teacher relationship.

As was just illustrated, in the eyes of teachers it is undeniably important to be empathetic. From a procedural standpoint, though, there are behavior types that can support and be supported by empathy. One of the behaviors that teachers consistently reported as beneficial in this regard was *patience*. The same teacher from program #1 who recognized the importance of being sensitive to opportunity gaps continued his dialogue in saying,

*"And what that means is a level of patience that goes above and beyond what you might expect of a teacher. Students are going to progress at different rates and we have to keep in mind that right now they are middle school students and they are twelve or thirteen years old. We are looking at twelve years of development and it is really hard to close gaps that have developed over twelve years, so there is a level of patience that teachers need when it comes to working with students from low-income backgrounds."*

On the other hand, one teacher from program #2 stated that patience is important but with two caveats. This teacher questioned both the feasibility and the true value of patience,

*"In terms of patience, isn't it just a struggle for all of us? Sometimes it is just that they are twelve years old. But does it really matter since it is just the summer? Does it matter if he sits down and focuses after he finishes his Doritos? But still I had to put it into perspective and remind myself that it is okay if they are bad for five minutes."*

On a related note, teachers from both programs identified a teachers' ***ability as a listener*** as an important characteristic. One teacher from program #2 described why it is important to keep your ears open, *"Some of these kids don't have full-time parents around, homes which are broken, so you feel a little bit greater of a responsibility. And just maybe listening more for those needs."* This sentiment was echoed by other teachers in the sample, but more in the sense that giving the impression that they truly are listening to the students is actually beneficial to the relationship.

An element of patience that three of the five teachers mentioned as important was in regards to their ***attitudes towards the mistakes and missteps of their students***. A teacher from program #2 provided some insight on this dynamic,

*"You have to do so by experiencing those mistakes with that kid, because if they continue to hide them you will never be able to get them anywhere. It is getting them to come to extra-help and seek it and talk through mistakes. Saying that it is okay they made them, but we can talk about how to fix them. You have to embrace whatever they did, you have to look positively and encourage them by telling them what they did right. So then they aren't afraid to raise their hand and go to the board. It takes time, it doesn't come over night, it could take me the whole year."*

This teacher recognized that mistakes are inevitable and struggles will ensue, but that it is the teachers' responsibility to help effectively manage these obstacles for their students. For one of the teachers from program #1, they were struck by how different the reactions to failure were for students from the academic enrichment program, as compared to the reactions of students from the independent school they teach for,

*"We really try to instill in them (enrichment program students) a higher standard. It is not a standard we set for them, but it is a standard they need to set for themselves. And to see failure as something that will happen, but also so it becomes something they can learn from and move past. We are often shocked at (the summer enrichment program) when students get C's on tests and do not even bat an eye. Sometimes when students bring in their report cards from school they say really non-chalantly, "I got an F in science". For a (independent school) student to get anything lower than a B really is the end of the world. The conversation about grades and performance is very different between the two."*

As this teacher suggested, it seems as though there is a delicate balancing act that becomes necessary—balancing between expecting struggles and then shifting their expectations. Furthermore, two of the teachers suggested that it is necessary to **look for warning signs** that their students may provide. One of the teachers from program #1 elaborated on this, “If I say, “*describe school in one sentence*”, and someone answers, “*I hate school!*” then it immediately gives me the sense that I probably need to go out of my way to approach that student outside of class. Have a conversation on why they hate school.” This could easily have been coded into the leadership dimension, but the key difference is that the teacher employed a tactic of gently and rationally discussing the students’ feelings, rather than simply mentally categorizing the comment.

As one can see, many of these philosophies and behaviors that teachers either exhibit or strive to undertake are closely linked to each other. For the purpose of analyzing these behaviors through the chosen framework, the aforementioned findings were sorted so that they would be explicitly recognized as important in their own right. Again, these findings were those reported by multiple teachers who were, to a degree, in agreement about the relevance of the particular themes. Of course, each teacher was driven by individual philosophies. On the whole, the five teachers sampled demonstrated a total of nineteen (19) behaviors or philosophies that were categorized into the *understanding* dimension. Moreover, it is relatively apparent that teachers see the value in employing interpersonal behaviors that fall within this dimension.

#### **4.1.4 Remaining Dimensions**

The three previously covered dimensions within the Interpersonal Teacher Behavior Model were those that were significantly represented across the teacher sample. The remaining five dimensions of *student autonomy*, *uncertain behavior*, *dissatisfied behavior*, *admonishing behavior* and *strictness* were mentioned quite infrequently, or not at all. The following paragraphs will try to illuminate some of the interesting points that teachers raised within these dimensions.

As we will soon see, a sense of *autonomy* is something that many of the students in the sample reported as important. Surprisingly few teachers mentioned the benefits of allowing their students to work with a semblance of autonomy. One teacher from program #1 questioned whether or not middle schools students should be allowed to work freely and on

their own. A teacher from program #2 was more explicit in their view on the role autonomy played at their program, “*We were guiding them in their projects, which turned out to mean that we are doing their projects because they are little. The projects were a little ambitious. There were different adults assigned. We tried to be more hands-off, but every day we had to be like “keep trying this, keep researching this.”*” One teacher from program #1 passively mentioned that they were able to provide more autonomy for their students when classes were smaller and distractions were limited.

In total, the dissatisfied, uncertain and admonishing dimensions were mentioned only one time each across the group of five teachers. Not surprisingly, all three were brought up in a dialogue about what is best to be avoided. To begin, a teacher from program #1 mentioned that when a teacher does not know something or is *uncertain*, it is best to admit so to their students—faking knowledge does nobody any good. On an unrelated note, a teacher from program #1 mentioned that an advantage that summer academic enrichment programs might have is that they are unlikely to attract *dissatisfied or glum* teachers. They felt that such teachers would take advantage of the teaching profession, being that it is often just a ten-month commitment. Again, on an unrelated note, a teacher from program #2 talked about how their ability to *admonish* students was different at the summer academic enrichment program. This teacher reported being hesitant to provide critical feedback for the students because of an uncertainty about how the parents would react to it if the student told their parents about the confrontation. Comparatively, this teacher felt that the parents of the students at the independent school would almost always back the teacher up because of the long-held parent-teacher relationships that they had built over the years—something that is probably tougher to develop at summer academic enrichment programs.

Apart from these brief mentions, it is apparent that teachers have strategies and philosophies that tend to ride along the right side (visually) of the Wubbels Interpersonal Teacher Behavior Model. The following section will use a similar structure to explore the ways in which students view the interpersonal behaviors of their teachers.

## **4.2    *Student Interviews***

The following sections will detail the relevant themes reported by students, specifically those that fell within each of the eight dimensions of interpersonal teacher behavior. The included

data consists of all twelve student interviews conducted at the two supplemental academic enrichment programs under study.

#### **4.2.1 Leadership Dimension (Students)**

Below I will explain the themes that emerged most often within the Leadership Dimension. As was explained in Chapter Two, behaviors that fit into this part of the interpersonal model are similar or related to; *noticing what is happening, leading, organizing, giving orders, setting tasks, determining procedures, structuring the classroom situation, explaining and holding students' attention*. The semi-structured nature of my interviews has not allowed for student reports of such behavior to arise in a nature that directly aligns with the aforementioned indicators of *leadership*. However, I have done my best to fairly categorize certain behavioral reports or ideals into the most fitting dimension of interpersonal behavior.

Nearly every student interviewed reported that they were encouraged by a teacher at their middle school to apply to the supplemental academic enrichment program that they are now enrolled in. For the most part, the students felt that their teacher made this recommendation because the teacher was aware of the performance of their students. A student from program #2 felt that they were recommended for the program because they were “*responsible and well-behaved*”, while another student from program #2 suggested they were chosen because “*I got good grades, mostly A's and B's. So the teachers chose me and some other students got recommendations, too.*” Similarly, a student from program #1 mentioned the advocacy of his teachers, “*Two teachers wrote recommendations for me and I didn't even know about it. Like one of my teachers took me aside and told me I was going to Achieve for an interview.*” This pattern of awareness is indicative of a teacher who notices what is happening, and can be actively or passively received by students as teacher behavior that demonstrates a leadership quality. Similarly, many of the students reported that they liked when their ***teachers recognized the successes of the students***. A student from program #1 reflected, “*I had one teacher in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and I wrote this story and he was really impressed and then he asked if received any help on it and that made me feel really good. And I love writing and it was good to hear that a piece of work that I did impressed a teacher.*” While students enjoy receiving positive feedback, it seems as though they prefer this type of reinforcement only when it is truly deserved. For students, it is important that teachers are attuned to their performance.



Students from both programs held the notion that their teachers within the enrichment programs were particularly effective in ***setting structures and thoroughly explaining tasks***. A student from program #1 reminisced about the impact that structure can have, *“I like that it (program #1) is kind of loose, but really structured as well with academics and things like that. I really like that we are so open—sometimes we have discussions about race and how we feel about ourselves and stuff.”* This student continued to explain that because the teachers and program administrators created a culture of consistency at multiple levels, students felt more comfortable with their teachers and their peers. For other students, they explicitly mentioned that structure and explanations provided by their teachers are crucial for their academic success. On a related note, many of these students suggested that this structure and consistency in pedagogical style creates conditions that help students to grow into a level of comfort that permits pro-relationship interactions with their teachers.

An element of pedagogical style preference that a few students identified as ideal is for a ***teacher with a strong and passionate tone of speaking***. For example, one student from program #1 elaborated, *“The way that they talk is important. Some teachers are really boring. I’ve never fallen asleep in a class, but sometimes I’ve gotten really close because it was so boring. I like teachers who have exciting voices.”* Another student from program #1 commented on why it is important to have a “charismatic and passionate” teacher, *“Because then you can have actual conversations with them instead of sitting there and having them yell at you or look all grumpy.”* Students’ sentiments suggest that a ***passionate teacher***, in general, is very important. One student from program #1 commented, *“I really like my Science teachers. When I am in Science I feel more engaged, alive and more interested than when I was in Math and then in Science everything was more interesting and there was more to learn.”* Another student from program #1 talked about how her love for particular subjects was partially a product of having teachers that truly loved the material they were teaching. Another student felt that sometimes students misperceive a teachers’ passion as them being strict or extremely demanding, but that when she opened her mind she was able to realize that the teacher just authentically loved their subject and wanted to produce students that could potentially share that passion.

On the whole, the students demonstrated a desire to have teachers that they considered to be ***experts in their fields***. The students suggested that the teachers in their enrichment programs were comparatively superior in relation to their teachers at their middle schools. This

expertise allows teachers to provide research strategies, innovative ideas, up-to-date knowledge and creative approaches to problem solving. One student from program #2 said, *“like the teachers were different here, everything about them. They just teach you in a different way than how other teachers would teach you. They just like taught us new ways to do things, different ways to research.”* Similarly, a student from program #1 iterated, *“They know stuff and just have a lot of degrees. They are very intelligent and I value someone who has a lot of intelligence to teach me.”* A few other students held similar views on teacher expertise; generally students placed a great deal of trust and value in teachers that they considered to be proficient and full of knowledge.

Many of the conversations yielded comments about the importance of ***teacher professionalism***. Some students viewed professionalism as tied to a teachers’ clothing style, while others viewed a teachers’ disciplinary style as indicative of their professionalism. One student for program #2 mentioned that the professionalism of the program director served almost like a model figure that helped to motivate the students towards their own success. A student from program #1 extended to the actions of teachers, *“It’s way different and better. Because they are professional. I mean the teachers at my school know how to be professional, but like if they get angry sometimes they tell us during class. At (program) they are more professional and will talk to us after class.”* In general, students expressed a preference for teachers who are adept at balancing efficiency with fun. These students felt that a teacher who could find the proper balance exemplifies a style that is truly professional. Furthermore, these same students expressed the belief that praise and criticism were more authentic if they came from a teacher that they felt was professional.

Amongst the entirety of interview questions, perhaps the one that elicited the most interesting responses was the question that asked students to describe their dream teacher. Descriptors that students offered that fell within the leadership dimension included; *professional, creative, colorful, smart, shows their personality, captures interest, fair, an expert, serious and a thorough explainer*. While most responses were rooted in narrow adjectives, a few students provided imaginative responses. For example, a student from program #1 dreamt,

*“Well, I would take the brain of Einstein cause he is very creative and a little off and people looked at him really weird and he was creative and smart. Smart people are sometimes boring, but a creative smart person gets your attention. A person who has new things going on in their head, it*

*might not always work out but just to have that idea inside of you makes you more interesting than a person who knows, 'oh ya this is this and that's that.' But a person who is like "maybe this is this, but maybe we can change it" and I would like take the actions of my teacher (at middle school), because she loves us and is just like all over the place and is really colorful. Um and I would take the language of (program teacher) because they just have really good English and knows a lot of languages. (Teacher) is very creative and is just all over the place. (Teacher) does not just stick to one thing, likes to learn about different cultures. So basically that would be my teacher."*

It seems that the students share many of the same ideals for teachers. The characteristics that they prefer tend to be ones that are reflective of teachers who know how to strike a "normal" balance between content delivery and being personable and enjoyable to work with.

As one can see, many of these philosophies and behaviors that students either retrospectively report or see as ideal are closely linked to each other. For the purpose of analyzing these behaviors through the chosen framework, the aforementioned findings were sorted so that they would be explicitly recognized as important in their own right. Again, these findings were those reported by multiple students who were, to a degree, in agreement about the relevance of the particular themes. The students were influenced by their own individual experiences and backgrounds. On the whole, the twelve students sampled referred to a total of sixty-four (64) behaviors or philosophies that I categorized into the *leadership* dimension. Moreover, it is relatively apparent that students see the value and also simply bare witness to interpersonal behaviors that fall within this dimension.

#### **4.2.2 *Helping/Friendly Dimension***

Below I will explain the themes that emerged most often within the Helping/Friendly Dimension. As was explained in Chapter Two, behaviors that fit into this part of the interpersonal behavior model are similar or related to; *assisting, showing an interest, joining in with students, behaving in a friendly and considerate manner, inspiring confidence and trust and an ability to make jokes with the students*. The semi-structured nature of my interviews has not allowed for instances of such behavior to arise in a nature that directly aligns with the aforementioned indicators of *being friendly and/or helpful*. However, I have

done my best to fairly categorize certain behaviors into the most fitting dimension of interpersonal behavior.

The nature of interviewing middle school students is that the ways they communicate their ideas tend to be rather basic. This section highlights the basic teacher behaviors that the students pick up on. It is not surprising that almost every student I interviewed mentioned a preference for **teachers who are fun**. For example, one student from program #1 described that, *“they should be more kind but also when there are times that we can talk (they should) add to the fun and not just be like a robot.”* Many of these students offered ways in which teachers can make class more fun, one rather obvious technique is for **teachers to be funny**. One student from program#1 suggested that, *“The teacher knew that it was okay to laugh with the students. And (teacher) made jokes and knew that it was okay to get silly at points, but then you have to get back on track. Also, they would have to have their own jokes and know the meaning of fun.”* Furthermore, another student from program #1 explained that their math teacher was really funny and that their humor helped inspire them to work harder. Additionally, a few students commented on their appreciation for teachers who are able to make **learning from their mistakes a fun exercise**. The students who mentioned this felt that some teachers chided them for their mistakes, while others accepted mistakes as normal. The teachers that were accepting were also able to design methods that made learning from mistakes a positive experience.

Many students also felt that it was more common for the teachers from the academic enrichment programs to **join in on fun with their students**. They also explained the advantages of working with teachers who **shared some of the same interests**. The general perception was that the program teachers made a greater effort to join in fun. The students did not report that the program teachers shared either greater or fewer interests than did their middle school teachers, though some did report that perhaps the program teachers were more attuned to them as individuals, resulting in a better awareness of what constitutes student’s actual interests.

Given that students reported an awareness of the individual attention that teachers give them, it is not surprising that students overwhelmingly reported an awareness of and also a preference for **teachers who care** about them. One student from program #1 reflected on a teacher that they really enjoyed working with, *“My teacher in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. I feel like she really cared about my well-being. I feel like she was really good at talking about things and asking*

*you questions about your life.*” Likewise, another student from program #1 expressed their belief that teachers should be there for them and that they should ***show an interest in their wellbeing***. Often, these students included the word ***“nice”*** within these explanations. It seems as though teachers can be labeled in this manner if they are adept at showing a general interest in their students.

Another quality that was regularly reported was ***teacher helpfulness***. For example, a student from program #1 said, *“They (program teachers) help me on whatever homework I need help on. It’s not like I ask a tutor for help and then they make me go ask someone else or anything like that.”* This student was not alone in positively reflecting on the affect that a helpful teacher can have. Another student from the same program felt that it was particularly nice to have a teacher who actively reached out to them to offer their help. The same students who felt that helping behavior was important, also mostly added that it was important for teachers to reinforce their good work through ***compliments and warranted praise***. This demonstrated both attentiveness to classroom happenings and also a willingness to go out of one’s way to provide a friendly comment for a student. Furthermore, such behaviors may also be indicators of a ***teacher who respects their students***. Some of the students wanted to clarify that they understood it was important to respect their teachers, but that sometimes they felt that teachers forgot that it was important to respect their students in return.

Interestingly, some students felt that their program teachers had a bit more freedom in their interactions with students. They commented that their middle school teachers ***“sometimes seemed like robots”*** and that they had a tough time opening up and being flexible with their students. The students displayed a level of awareness that there were more systematic restrictions that might produce this dilemma for well-intentioned public school teachers. There was a feeling that the teachers from the programs displayed more helping/friendly behavior than did their middle school teachers, but not because the two were inherently different on a general level.

Amongst the entirety of interview questions, perhaps the one that elicited the most interesting responses was the question that asked students to describe their dream teacher. Descriptors that students offered that fell within the *helping/friendly dimension* were: *inspiring confidence, fun, funny, adept at joking with students and also sharing interests with students*. One student from program #1 effectively summarized the sentiments of many of his classmates,

*“Well for one, they would have to be nice and they would have to be smart and have the capacity to be silly. They are not afraid to express themselves in their own way. Or to like do activities with us, like one of my teachers plays basketball with us. They would have to have their own jokes and know the meaning of fun.”*

Another imaginative student from program #1 creatively explained their dream teacher, including many qualities that fit within the helping/friendly dimension,

*“They would be like really funny, but would have moments where they would be serious. They would help you learn how to learn. They would give us free food. They would explain everything to the point where you would get everything that they are talking about. They would meet with you and not be like “you did this wrong, you did that wrong”. They would have a colorful room. They would not dress in a suit, but they would dress professionally. They would have a clock, but they would not always follow a schedule to like the exact minute. Like we would just flow into things, still get things done, but sometimes more or less than expected. They would help you with your homework. They would give you choices in activities--sometimes I like to work alone and others I like to work in groups. They would not be really harsh graders, they would give you an okay grade depending on how hard you worked on it.”*

Again, these findings were those reported by multiple students who were, to a degree, in agreement about the relevance of the particular themes. The students were influenced by their own individual experiences and backgrounds. On the whole, the twelve students sampled referred to a total of seventy-eight (78) behaviors or philosophies that I categorized into the *helping/friendly* dimension. Moreover, it is relatively apparent that students see the value and also simply bare witness to interpersonal behaviors that fall within this dimension.

#### **4.2.3 Understanding Dimension**

The remaining sections mostly include behaviors that were mentioned on merely one or two occasions. The nature of interviewing students, especially those of a younger age, is that they are likely to produce rather varied responses. Whereas teachers might be informed by similar academic or professional experiences, the students often come from a wide variety of backgrounds, which generates an array of different perspectives. As a result, this section will

weave together the mixed responses to attempt to explain the behaviors that were categorized into the *understanding* dimension.

Among the items categorized into the *understanding dimension*, there were a few that were traits students identified as befitting of *understanding* teachers. In general, students reported a preference for teachers whose ***actions inspired comfort*** in their students. While students did not elaborate on what sort of actions made them comfortable, one did explain that if they felt comfortable in the presence of their teachers, it was likely that their confidence as a student would increase. Surprisingly, only one of the students talked about the positives of having a teacher who is a ***skilled listener***. This is particularly interesting because of the reports teachers provided about the importance they placed on giving students the impression that they are listening attentively. One student from program #2 talked about their appreciation for a teacher at their middle school that demonstrated an ***understanding of the experiences of middle-school aged students***, “My 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. She like always helped us with our problems. She would be like a best friend to you. She would just like always talk to you and explain why this and that happened. She would even talk to us about our drama.” Perhaps it is examples such as this one that students perceive as indicative of teachers that are good listeners. Furthermore, a handful of students mentioned their appreciation for teachers or administrators who were skilled at ***cultivating an environment that is open***, both in terms of their ability to have relationships with students and also in creating a classroom culture that allows freedom of expression. Again, this reported preference is another example of how a teacher can demonstrate their ability as an empathetic and aware person. Another interesting finding was that a few students talked about the importance of the vocal characteristics of their teachers. Some students talked about the importance of their teacher having an “exciting” voice, however some others talked about how they like teachers whose ***voices seem to be caring***. This suggests that teachers’ efforts to appear understanding might actually transcend the teacher’s locus of control. However, students suggested that teachers could possibly alter their tone to make it seem as though they are more caring.

A few students displayed a certain level of maturity, as they were able to suggest that a relationship will not happen if students do not input their own effort into the relationship with their teacher. This exemplifies that it is not necessarily only the teacher’s job to be *understanding*, but it is also the job of the student to demonstrate that they are able to understand more about the context surrounding each student-teacher relationship. In fact,

multiple students from program #1 mentioned that they felt that both students and teachers in the program ***demonstrated a greater level of empathy towards each other in the program***, especially in comparison to what they felt in their traditional middle schools. One student from program #1 highlighted their feeling that the teachers at the program might actually better understand the skills that it takes to work with students from underserved backgrounds, *“I feel like the teachers at (academic enrichment program) work with students like me more. My other school’s teachers do not really know how to connect with kids of different races.”* This response seems to fit with the other student’s beliefs suggesting that the teachers within the program are better at empathizing with students than their middle school teachers are.

Overall, students did not report an overwhelming number of instances of a dream teacher that could be categorized into the *understanding* dimension, but a few students did mention that they would dream of having a teacher who was skilled at ***laughing off their student’s mistakes and then offering them second chances***. However, the most commonly referred to quality in a dream teacher was a desire for them to be ***caring***. Of course each student will define ‘caring’ differently, but that they used the same adjective to describe a dream teacher is a finding, in and of itself. In total, students reported thirty-eight (38) occurrences of or preferences for interpersonal behaviors that fit into the *understanding* dimension of the framework.

#### **4.2.4 Student Autonomy Dimension**

Students from both programs, but especially program #2, spoke about their appreciation for opportunities to ***work either independently or in groups to complete hands-on projects***. It is not surprise that many students similarly expressed a dislike for teachers that were stuck in what they deemed an “old style of lecturing”. For example, a student from program #2 said, *“Older teachers do it the old-fashioned way—like researching and studying more, without doing hands-on projects.”* Another student from program #2 explained their love for hands-on projects, *“One that lets us do projects and brings in things that we can touch and go oooh, ahhh.”* Another student expressed ***distaste for lectures that are dominated by teachers***, but simultaneously acknowledged that lectures can be good if they are interactive in nature. This fits nicely with the preference that a few students reported for ***not sitting idly in class***. While students like to be interactive, they still would likely choose to listen to a lecture or engage in challenging work than to sit around idly with no urgent task at hand.



Regardless of a student's preference for hands-on or lecture style learning, students alluded to their belief that it is a ***teacher's job to guide students*** rather than to instruct them on how to do something. One student from program #1 commented on this element of quasi-autonomy, *"I think teaching is about guiding the students to get there. Lets say the students are "here" and the class just talks it out and they have that epiphany together. The teacher is just monitoring it and keeping it controlled. In math it is different, but still it goes with all subjects to an extent."* If a teacher is able to effectively ***maintenance their own attitude they can positively influence their student's willingness to think independently***. Students mentioned that teachers who allow students to "share their opinions" and who emit a "loose" feeling are most likely to possess the attitude necessary. Interestingly, students reported experiencing greater freedom and more open teachers within their academic enrichment programs than in their middle schools. One student from program #1 reflected on the openness of the enrichment program, *"I really like that we are so open—sometimes we have discussions about race and how we feel about ourselves and stuff."* This student was subtly given ***autonomy and the freedom to think in their own way***, which resulted in positive feelings towards the pedagogical style of such teachers in their enrichment program.

Two students mentioned the same characteristic of a dream teacher that fit within this dimension: teachers who give their students choice in what activities they do. In total, though, there were thirty-seven (37) occurrences of or preferences for interpersonal behaviors that fit into the *autonomy* dimension of the framework. That being said, it is clear that students are sensitive to issues related to their freedom and independence, perhaps more so than their teachers are aware.

#### ***4.2.5 Uncertain Dimension***

Below I will explain the themes that emerged most often within the *Uncertain Dimension*. As was explained in Chapter Two, behaviors that fit into this part of the interpersonal behavior model are similar or related to; *keeping a low profile, apologizing, admitting when one is wrong and waiting to see which direction the wind blows*. The semi-structured nature of my interviews has not allowed for instances of such behavior to arise in a nature that directly aligns with the aforementioned indicators of *being uncertain*. However, I have done my best to fairly categorize certain behaviors into the most fitting dimension of interpersonal behavior.

For the most part, students reported that teachers who demonstrate *uncertain* behaviors are seen unfavorably. For example, a number of students reported a dislike for *teachers that failed to be helpful* or *claimed that they were unfit to assist a student because they lacked the necessary knowledge*. One of these students hypothesized that some of the teachers may truly possess the knowledge, or at least at one point did possess expertise, but because of a passive or disinterested nature they have decided not to effectively transmit the knowledge to their students. Some students might perceive such actions as *laziness*, which actually was a heavily used word with which students explained teacher qualities they disliked. One student from program #2 described an experience she had at her middle school, “*At my other school there was this one time where I was having trouble with a subject, but because they think I am smart they did not really help me. They kind of just assumed that I understood it.*” In a way, the teacher was showing awareness that this particular student is normally a good student, but the teacher rested on their laurels and assumed that the students did not need any attention. It would be hard to label this laziness, but is certainly an example of a teacher who unintentionally neglected to contribute to increasing the student’s knowledge base. Similarly, another student from program #1 commented about a teacher from their middle school, “*My 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher; she did some of the same things my 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher did, but she just did not make me work as hard and I sort of started to fall apart. But she still liked me as a student, though I did not understand why and it sort of made me work less hard.*” This student suggests that *lazy praise* or *undeserved commendation* actually resulted in their work ethic decreasing. In a way, this type of behavioral exchange is characteristic of a teacher who may be lacking assertiveness in dealing with their students. Furthermore, one student from program#1 suggested that some of the teachers at their middle school might just be there because teaching is a steady job that also allows them to go through the motions, “*Well here (academic enrichment program) it is better because it does not feel like they are doing it for money. Yeah, they are getting paid but it feels like they want to be here and they want us to learn something. I mean it is not like they (middle school teachers) are there just to get paid, but it seems like they are just going through the motions.*” This shows this student’s particular distaste for teachers who go in whichever direction the wind blows them.

Interestingly enough, there was one student who identified dream teachers as those who exemplified three different behaviors that I was able to fit into the *uncertain* dimension: occasionally letting students do as they please, not following a strict schedule or rubric and also tending to go with the flow in most instances. However, these were the only positively

reported dimensions that could be fit into the *uncertain* dimension. At the end, there were eleven (11) occurrences of or preferences for interpersonal behaviors that fit into the *uncertain* dimension of the framework.

#### **4.2.6 Dissatisfied Dimension**

Below I will explain the themes that emerged most often within the *Dissatisfied* Dimension. As was explained in Chapter Two, behaviors that fit into this part of the interpersonal behavior model are similar or related to; *waiting for silence, considering pros and cons, keeps quiet, shows dissatisfaction, looks glum, questions or criticizes*. The semi-structured nature of my interviews has not allowed for instances of such behavior to arise in a nature that directly aligns with the aforementioned indicators of *being dissatisfied*. However, I have done my best to fairly categorize certain behaviors into the most fitting dimension of interpersonal behavior.

Nearly all of the behaviors and behavioral ideals that were categorized into the *dissatisfied* dimension were disseminated in a tone suggesting their undesirability. In fact, when students were asked how they would describe a **“nightmare” teacher**, many of their responses fit into this dimension. For example, students from both programs mentioned that a nightmare teacher would neglect to provide explanations for their actions, would repeat curriculum, would be disinterested, would always appear frustrated, always would seem mad and also clearly lack passion for their job. Furthermore, nightmare teachers would generally mistreat their students through their rude or disinterested behavior.

Students also reported a dislike for teachers who ***give grumpy looks to their students***. For example, one student from program #1 commented, *“You can just sense the vibe when a teacher does not like you. Like the way they act, the way they look at you and the tone of their voice and stuff like that.”* A student from program #2 talked about how some teachers at their middle school ***lacked respect for certain students***. This student suggested that teachers did not respect students who were prone to misbehaving and often held presumptions about them that were hard to shift.

In total, there were relatively few mentions of experienced teacher behavior within the *dissatisfied* realm. It seems, though, that there is a preference amongst students for teachers to

avoid such behaviors. The students interviewed mentioned behaviors or ideals that fit into the *dissatisfied* dimension a total of twelve (12) times.

#### 4.2.7 *Admonishing Dimension*

Below I will explain the themes that emerged most often within the *Admonishing* Dimension. As was explained in Chapter Two, behaviors that fit into this part of the interpersonal behavior model are similar or related to; *getting angry, taking pupils to task, expressing irritation, expressing anger, forbidding, correcting and punishing*. The semi-structured nature of my interviews has not allowed for instances of such behavior to arise in a nature that directly aligns with the aforementioned indicators of acting in an *admonishing* manner. However, I have done my best to fairly categorize certain behaviors into the most fitting dimension of interpersonal behavior.

Each behavior or hypothetical behavior reported within this dimension was of the negative variety. Many of the perspectives that were categorized into this dimension are actually similar to those that were categorized into the dissatisfied dimension, however these behaviors were seen as more intentional and explicit in nature. For example, many of the students mentioned their dislike for teachers who either **yell or raise their voices**. For example, one student from program #2 reflected on their middle school teacher's actions,

*“Like when the teachers scream usually people start like talking and never get their work done. Like they usually do not give like directions sometimes. They just continue on screaming and stuff like that. Like I had one teacher in 5<sup>th</sup> grade who was kind of like that but she moved to another school. She could scream so loud that people on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor could hear her when she was on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor.”*

This student highlighted two aspects of teachers who scream and yell. Firstly, they sometimes do not provide appropriate explanation for their yelling and the subsequent **punishments are often not rationalized**. Furthermore, this student noticed that when teacher scream and yell their students might actually lose their focus even more. On a related note, more than one student reported a strong dislike for occasions **when teachers call them out for something during class**—actions that often lead to student's being embarrassed in front of their classmates. Similarly, one student from program #1 expressed displeasure with teachers who act “unprofessionally” by **pointing out their academic mistakes in front of their classmates**.

This student reflected about the teacher who corrected her in front of the class without her consent,

*“Well, I sort of have one at (program) that I do not really like to talk to, like if you are in a car they would be on your bumper. Like they will always be looking at you, they would look over your shoulder. I do not really like that from teachers. I do not really like them to see my work until it is in the paper. Because if they look over and see that it is wrong, like once that happened and then they went up to the board and explained my mistake (at program).”*

This student also referred to their dislike for teachers who ***look over their shoulders***, or in other words, for teachers who micro-manage the classroom experience. In addition, students also talked about their dislike for instances in which ***teachers give them intentionally “ugly looks”***.

Not surprisingly, quite a few students responded to the question of ***“nightmare” teachers*** with qualities that were easily categorized into the admonishing dimension. These included teachers who have “smoke coming out of their ears”, teachers who yell a lot, teachers who do not respect students as normal people, teachers who are mean and teachers who are impatient. In the end, nearly every student reported instances in which teachers demonstrated *admonishing* behavior, but they also expressed a few hypothetical actions that teachers would be best served to try to avoid. In total, twenty (20) behaviors or behavioral ideals were mentioned that fit into the *admonishing* dimension.

#### **4.2.8 Strict Dimension**

Below I will explain the themes that emerged most often within the *Strict* Dimension. As was explained in Chapter Two, behaviors that fit into this part of the interpersonal behavior model are similar or related to; *keeping reins tight, checking on students, judging students, exacting norms, setting rules, being strict, getting class silent and maintaining that silence*. The semi-structured nature of my interviews has not allowed for instances of such behavior to arise in a nature that directly aligns with the aforementioned indicators of acting in a *strict* manner. However, I have done my best to fairly categorize certain behaviors into the most fitting dimension of interpersonal behavior.

Before I begin to highlight some of the findings that have emerged within the *strict* dimension, it is interesting to note that students use the word “strict” to describe many teacher behaviors that they either do not approve of or that inhibit their freedom. Furthermore, it seems that students show relative disagreement between each other as it relates to behaviors they feel are associated with strictness. With this being said, I still have made an effort to fairly assess the words of the students within the *strict* dimension.

As we saw in the reports of some of the teachers, they felt it was important to accept that “kids will be kids” and to sometimes let things happen as they may. With that being said, it is not shocking that students expressed frustrations with *teachers who do not let anything slide*. Along with this, students also felt that teachers need to *acknowledge that mistakes are inevitable*. On a related note, students expressed hesitance in evaluating teachers’ tendencies to reward well-behaved students. One student viewed it as favoritism that influenced the misbehaved students to continue misbehaving, while another student felt that it could teach the misbehaving students a lesson by denying them the same rewards for good behavior. One student mentioned that teachers regularly try to use *threats of decreased grades* to discourage students away from the behavior that they view as negative. Through these actions, and also through others that are similar, it is not surprising that teachers can begin *to brand certain students in particular ways*. In some ways, this could be worrisome because of stereotype fulfillment identity creations, but one student thinks it might be good for a student to be branded negatively, as it might teach them a lesson.

A few students differentiated their program teachers as less strict than their middle school teachers, mainly because the program teachers were not as strict about following a plan of action for class. However, this more laidback approach led to more independent and group work assignments. One student expressed dissatisfaction with teachers who felt it was necessary to *micro-manage* the opportunities they gave to disengage from each other. Furthermore, one student from program #1 commented on a middle school teacher who was not empathetic and *strictly* enacted his predetermined rules and norms, “*Because my teacher, sometimes he can be really rude and he goes at his own pace and when you ask him to slow down he just will not and then he will tell you that this is big kids school.*” Another student from program #1 felt that it is not necessarily about the teacher being strict, mean or lacking empathy,

*“That is just kind of the way that they are because that is how our school hardwires their brains to be. Because we are a very strict school; we have uniforms, we have a detention day system, we have homework completion if you do not finish your homework. So it just gets hardwired into their brain, or maybe because they have been in the system for so long they do not know how to stop it.”*

In fact, this student believes that the ***teachers might actually be brainwashed to be strict***, which may be against their inherent tendencies.

Somewhat surprisingly, no students reported that their nightmare teacher would be strict. This suggests that students might feel that strictness is not necessarily a negative, but simply a tactic that works for certain individuals more than others. In total, thirty (30) behaviors or behavioral ideals were mentioned that fit into the *admonishing* dimension.

The following chapter will aim to shed light on some of the points at which students and teachers either intersect or diverge from each other in their interpersonal behaviors and behavioral ideals. Once these are highlighted, the paper will conclude by discussing the conduciveness of the interpersonal behaviors that have been illuminated to the concept of resilience. The final chapter will also look at the implications of these findings for summer/weekend academic enrichment programs.

## **Chapter Five: Comparing Views of Students and Teachers**

This brief chapter will attempt to provide some answers regarding the second research question that was posited in Chapter One. The question under consideration is as follows: *At which points do the perceptions of students and teachers intersect and/or diverge with regards to the interpersonal behaviors that exist between each other?* On the whole, this study revealed substantial matching of perceptions between students and teachers, though students and teachers placed seemingly unequal weight on certain interpersonal behaviors. There were also cases in which students and teachers' views were completely different. The following pages will illuminate points of divergence and intersection in perceptions. These observations will make use of the dimensions set forth by the Interpersonal Model of Teacher Behavior, to facilitate easier interpretation of the findings.

### **5.1 Leadership Dimension**

An element of leadership that students and teachers seemed to see eye-to-eye on was that it is important for teachers to notice the successes of their students, no matter how big or small those successes may be. Students conveyed this through their overwhelming articulation of an interest in receiving positive feedback from their teachers. Interestingly, not a single student expressed the belief that critical or negative feedback could serve a beneficial purpose. On the other hand, teachers expressed the importance of providing students both positive and critical feedback.

Both students and teachers shared the belief that classroom structure is important. However, students felt that this structure produced better opportunities for student-teacher relationships to develop, whereas teachers saw structure as a means for developing a culture that permits content and knowledge transmission. It is possible that teachers might be structuring their classrooms with purposes that are mismatched with student views on structure. Of course, such mismatch may also be insignificant because students may lack the reflective abilities to see that if structure helps relationship development, it may also ultimately help promote better content transmission conditions. On a related note, teachers omitted comments about their actual styles of transmission. This was interesting because students expressed a clear sensitivity to even the most particular elements of transmission, for example the perceived passion of teachers and teacher tone of voice. This is not to say that teachers do not think about the impact that the particularities of their behaviors could have on the transmission



process, but it should reinforce that it is indeed important to pay attention to the little things, as students are increasingly aware of them.

Teachers generally spoke about these leadership behaviors in a much more nuanced way than did their students. Students used their actual experiences to explain their feelings, while teachers generally highlighted their strategies and philosophies. Though it is often easier to decipher the meaning of the teacher's comments, the comments need not differ in importance from those of the students.

## **5.2 *Helping/Friendly Dimension***

Regarding this dimension, there appears to be a strong match in perceptions between students and teachers. Firstly, it seems that students clearly seek teachers that are both fun and funny. Similarly, teachers clearly saw the need for injecting humor into their classes. They also felt that it was important to highlight the interests they share with their students and also to join in on activities and games with their students. Some students thought that their middle school teachers were "like robots" in this regard. These students felt that the teachers from the academic enrichments programs were much more likely and willing to have fun with their students than were the middle school teachers. However, I had no direct information from the middle school teachers from the public schools. If I had been able to engage in conversations with them it would have been interesting to speak about humor in the classroom, joining in on student activities and sharing interests with students. Furthermore, this dynamic of humor in the classroom is important because of the demonstrated, albeit indirect, connection between classroom humor and student achievement (Masten, 1986, p. 471). Masten suggests that teachers who allow a culture of humor into their classroom tend to provide an environment that permits students to feel comfortable sharing their own sense of humor. Masten's research also demonstrated that teachers tend to perceive students that show their humor as more intellectually engaged learners. If this humor is well received by their peers and their teachers, it is likely to lead to greater feelings of acceptance and possibly to an increased likelihood of high academic performance.

Both students and teachers spoke of the importance of caring. Teachers recognized that it was important to truly care about their students, while students emphasized that they wanted to feel that their teachers cared about them as individuals. While a few of the teachers specifically spoke of the importance of 'caring', others talked about the importance of

establishing a rapport with their students. On the whole, both teachers and students mentioned similar teacher behaviors that were conducive for either establishing rapport or indicative of truly caring teachers. These behaviors include: showing an interest in the wellbeing of students, being nice, being helpful, offering compliments to students and respecting students.

As one can see, there was a great deal of matching in perceptions regarding this dimension. This agreement on the importance of qualities indicative of helping and friendly behaviors might beg questions about how situated they are in the context of a particular school or cultural community. Humorous discourse in schools can be broken into three primary groups: universal humor that can maintain its humorous contents across cultures, humor specifically based in a culture and also linguistically based humor (Schmitz, 2002, p. 93). It may be interesting for future research to look at how humor is shared, or not, within school communities comprised of students from various cultural backgrounds.

### **5.3     *Understanding Dimension***

Teachers and students share comparable views on the role that behaviors play within the understanding dimension. Both students and teachers felt that the teacher must possess an ability to listen attentively. Given that listening is important, it comes as very little surprise that students seek teachers who are empathetic to their situations and able to create an open and accepting environment for them. For their part, teachers in this sample showed a desire to create a classroom culture that is tolerant of mistakes and lapses in focus on the part of the students. Furthermore, students commented on their preference for teachers who can laugh off mistakes and kindly offer them second chances. Teachers spoke about this in terms of patience. In general, students and teachers have showed mutual understanding on the importance of listening, patience and empathy.

However, a few students did think that the teachers in the summer academic enrichment programs showed greater empathy than did their middle school teachers. But this study does not have direct information from the students' middle school teachers with which these students' perceptions could be compared.

### **5.4     *Student Autonomy Dimension***

The self-determination theory concerns individuals' innate psychological needs and growth tendencies, and posits autonomy as one of the three key needs for optimal human

development (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 68). Self-determination theory holds that humans are generally well endowed with intrinsic motivation, but that supportive conditions are needed in order to harness intrinsic motivation. One of these conditions is relatedness to other humans. One of the other factors supporting ideal human development is the presence of opportunities for autonomy over those circumstances that are more strictly controlled (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70). Ultimately, Deci and Ryan found that situations supportive of autonomy were likely to foster greater internalization and integration of motivation into behavioral patterns. Thus those who are positioned to motivate others, in this instance: teachers, should support one of the apparent key psychological needs— autonomy (2000, p. 76).

The results of this study have shown a rather sizable disparity in teacher and student perceptions regarding student autonomy. Generally, students expressed deep appreciation of instances in which they were able to work autonomously or in student groups. These students clearly have been given such opportunities to work autonomously, but interestingly the teachers did not speak of these strategies. In fact, one of the teachers even questioned whether or not it was right to give middle school students much autonomy. This disparity was one of the more noticeable divergences in the data that was collected.

Culture likely plays an important role in perceptions of certain dimensions of autonomy. Generally, the US and most western cultures can be considered individualistic, at varying degrees. However, the ethnic composition of the US is rather mixed, there may be cultural mixing in the student-student and student-teacher dynamics. This mixing may have implications for the study of autonomy in classrooms. For example, when a Mexican immigrant student enters a classroom that is led by an Anglo-American teacher there may be a disconnection related to autonomy. Due to a likely western orientation towards individualism, a teacher might expect students to be independent, actively engaged and autonomous in class, while students may not be used to such an expectation (Kagitcibasi, 2005, p. 416). This hypothetical disconnect is something that should be considered when teachers consider autonomy in the classroom.

## **5.5     *Uncertain Dimension***

To serve as a refresher, behaviors that fit into this part of the interpersonal behavior model are similar or related to; *keeping a low profile, apologizing, admitting when one is wrong and waiting to see which direction the wind blows*. Behaviors that fall within this dimension are

primarily seen as undesirable by both students and teachers, thus it comes as no surprise that teachers will speak very little of behaviors that could be categorized into this dimension. Students, by all means, could speak of instances in which teachers demonstrate uncertain behaviors. Despite the infrequency of such behaviors in this study, one interesting matching point was related to the distribution of praise. A couple students and teachers recognized that it was important for teachers to praise and compliment students only when it was truly deserved. An interesting divergence was shown with regards to how students and teachers view instances in which teacher knowledge is questioned. Students disliked teachers that lacked the necessary knowledge and skills needed to help students with their academic troubles. Whereas at least one teacher felt that if they did not know something, then it was best to admit so to their students. This is merely the opinion of one student, but it still may be important for teachers to bear in mind that students expect teachers to be knowledgeable.

## **5.6     *Other Dimensions***

As was briefly touched upon earlier, teachers spoke very little about behaviors that could be categorized into the *dissatisfied*, *admonishing* and *strict* dimensions. Of course, students spoke of these issues from the perspective that behaviors associated with the aforementioned dimensions are generally one's that are best avoided by teachers. However, given that only the student group spoke about such behaviors, it makes comparison of matches and mismatches rather difficult. However, this in and of itself is a comparison and also begs questions about the reliability of teachers' self-reports of behaviors related to these dimensions.

## **5.7     *Where to go from here?***

Thus far, findings have largely been shared with minimal consideration of their relevance to classroom practicalities. The chapter that follows will point to potential implications of the findings. This will be done in two ways; firstly, I will discuss the implications that certain behaviors could have for teaching and secondly, I will look at possible conduciveness of such behaviors to student resilience. Lastly, I will attempt to discuss the relevance of these findings for summer and/or weekend academic enrichment programs.

## Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter will begin by addressing the third research question, which primarily concerns the ways in which interpersonal teacher behaviors align, or not, with factors demonstrated in relevant literature to be conducive to student resilience. Then insights regarding the research questions it initially set will be provided and there will be a discussion of the implications of the findings regarding teachers and academic enrichment programs. When possible, the results from this study will be compared with outside research. The chapter will finish with a conclusion that will weave together the paper's findings in light of previous research.

### 6.1 *Interpersonal Teacher Behavior Linked to Student Resilience*

As Benard (1995, p. 3-4) explained, there are three primary categories into which the protective factors or possibilities can be grouped: caring relationships, high expectations and opportunities for participation. These three broad categories will provide very general structure for the discussion of the linkages between protective factors and interpersonal behaviors.

The first overarching categorization is *caring relationships* (Benard, 1995, p. 3). The present study found a large presence of shared perspectives, behavioral philosophies and also experienced behaviors that all suggest that this protective factor is well-supported.

Interpersonal behaviors touched upon by sampled teachers such as: *attempting to establish rapport, building the trust of students, serving as a role model, sharing interests and humor, displaying empathy, listening attentively, being patient and looking for warning signs*, can all function as protective factors in the student-teacher relationship. As was illustrated in the previous chapter, there seemed to be a great deal of matching between students and teachers under the *caring relationship* umbrella. Not surprisingly, students identified many of the same behaviors and strategies as teachers. It would appear that teachers and students share agreement on the importance of caring relationships. This is encouraging because much research identifies such protective factors as important in the resilience process.

As we already have seen, Downey (2008, p. 57) conducted a synthesis of multiple different sources of information that resulted in twelve recommendations for classrooms wishing to promote resilience amongst the at-risk students that occupy them. Each of these twelve recommendations can be loosely fit into Benard's three broad categorizations of protective

possibilities. According to Downey, one recommendation is for teachers to ***build healthy interpersonal relationships with students*** (Downey, 2008, p. 57). She suggests that this can be accomplished by “developing strong, positive, personal relationships with students that are characterized by respect, caring, trust and cohesiveness” (Downey, 2008, p. 57). In fact, students and teachers in the present sample used many of these exact words in the interviews. It would appear that the findings of the present study indicate strong sensitivity to this protective possibility.

Another recommendation was to ***use student’s strengths to promote high self-esteem*** (Downey, 2008, p. 58). Downey suggests that this can be done by “focusing on personal achievements and strengths so that individual self-esteem increases” (Downey, 2008, p. 58). The present findings illustrated a shared understanding that it is important for teachers to notice the successes of their students and distribute appropriate positive feedback. However, in contrast to the teachers, students did not speak about the importance of critical feedback. Regardless, it would seem that those in this sample are adhering to this particular recommendation.

Another recommendation was to ***develop a meaningful and caring community*** (Downey, 2008, p. 59). The suggestion associated with this was to “emphasize encouragement, trust, caring and a sense of belonging” (Downey, 2008, p. 59). Ultimately, students need to feel safe and respected in the classroom environment for them to do well. Essentially the more comfortable students are, the better they do (Downey, 2008, p. 59). This association is not necessarily unidirectional, as it is possible that the better a student performs the more comfortable they will feel. Still, both affects support the belief that this recommendation is ultimately important. On the whole, both teachers and students spoke extensively in this realm. As a matter of fact, students spoke positively of the community feeling of their academic enrichment programs. This suggests that this may be a protective factor that is particularly strong in such programs.

The second overarching categorization is *high expectations* (Benard, 1995, p. 3). The findings of the present study suggest that teachers and students mostly share perceptions that align with this condition and its associated protective factors. Teachers spoke of particular strategies and behaviors related to this broad category. These included: *setting a strong classroom culture, being realistic with students and helping students to contextualize their mistakes or struggles*. Students, on the other hand, mentioned some related preferences and

experiences: *impressing teachers who they deem to be experts in a particular field, teachers who set firm structures and teachers who know how to respond to student's mistakes*. While the behaviors, philosophies and strategies that fall within this broad category of *high expectations* seem rather minimal in this instance, there still seems to be at least some adherence to Downey's resilience recommendations.

One of Downey's suggestions was to ***set and communicate high, realistic expectations for academic performance*** (Downey, 2008, p. 58), which can be accomplished by "maintaining a can-do attitude, emphasizing effort and success and providing supports for academic success" (Downey, 2008, p. 58). Interestingly, it seems that there was greater tendency for teachers and students to speak about realistic, rather than high expectations. One may only speculate about the reasons for this, but it is possible that the reasons could relate to the academic enrichment programs. Since the teachers demonstrated a strong understanding of and empathy for the situations of the students from their programs, it begs consideration of how this awareness affects the expectations that teachers have for such students. Still, the students and teachers sampled all seemed to relay messages that were positive in regards to the presence of high and realistic expectations.

An additional recommendation made by Downey was to ***tell students that they are personally responsible for their own success*** (Downey, 2008, p. 59), which could be supported by "helping students to accomplish personal goals and a sense of pride in their accomplishments and by fostering the development of an internal locus of control" (Downey, 2008, p. 59). The responses obtained from the teachers suggest that there is awareness that it is important to create a sense of responsibility and accountability for their students. However, some students seem to eschew some responsibility onto their teachers and schools. Of course, this could simply be a product of the student's understanding of my research being about student-teacher relationships, which may encourage them to think about the teacher's role, rather than their own role in the relationship dynamic. Either way, teachers would be wise to consider both explicit and implicit strategies for encouraging students to take responsibility for their success.

Downey also feels that teachers would be smart to ***set clear and consistent expectations for student behavior*** (Downey, 2008, p. 60). She proposes that this could be accomplished by "maintaining clear structure for classroom behavior, both academic and social structures" (Downey, 2008, p. 60). The data from this study suggests that teachers have a clear

understanding of the positive effects that structure can have for students, mainly in relation to academic content transmission. Students felt that structure helped in the development of relationships, but neglected to correlate it to academic benefits. This may be interesting with regards to how students perceive structure in the classroom. Questions that may impact this dimension include: *What impact does the ethnic background of students and teachers have on classroom structure? What impact does school culture have on perceptions of classroom structure or freedom? What impact does the short-term nature of the summer academic enrichment programs have on receptiveness to structure?* Essentially, teachers must consider many variables when creating expectations for student behaviors, thus complicating this dimension as a pathway to student resilience. However, the one aspect that is left in little doubt is the importance of consistent and equitable structure and repercussions for students and classrooms.

Finally, Downey had two recommendations for teachers looking to promote student resilience from a skills-based perspective. First is that teachers should ***teach transferable life skills*** (Downey, 2008, p. 61) by “working with students on their social skills, conflict resolution skills, assertiveness, problem solving, communication skills and critical thinking abilities” (Downey, 2008, p. 61). Similarly, she suggests that teachers should ***emphasize literacy skills*** (Downey, 2008, p. 62), even above other core academic relevancies. Teachers in the sample fully embraced being a role model. Interestingly, some of the teachers saw their role in these academic enrichment programs as characterized by their ability to impart life-skills and to give their students opportunities that they miss out on at their normal schools. Students, though, still primarily saw teachers as imparters of knowledge. Thus it is not surprising that students commented that the teachers at the academic enrichment programs seemed more “like friends” and that they “cared” more than did their traditional middle school teachers.

The third overarching categorization concerns the presence of *opportunities for participation* (Benard, 1995, p. 4). It is said that students who have the opportunity to share their natural gifts with the school, their teachers and their peers are more likely to develop a sense of pride and belonging that can help to foster processes conducive to resilience (Benard, 1995, p. 4). In fact, it has also been said that opportunities for participation and engagement are actually basic human needs, and if they are ignored it can lead to a student’s alienation from their institution (Benard, 1995, p. 4). Given the importance of providing students with opportunities for participation, it comes as very little surprise that students that were sampled



consistently spoke of their appreciation for group work and individual work that granted them autonomy. Students specifically spoke of some related preferences and distastes: *independent and group work was valued, dislike for idly sitting in class, distaste for lectures that were dominated by teachers and an interest in the freedom to think independently*. Somewhat surprisingly, teachers did not speak about issues related to student autonomy or providing the students with opportunities to participate in different activities or projects. That is not to say that teachers would not talk about these types of issues if directly asked about them, however it was interesting to see that they did not, even on their own accord, speak about these as potential strategies or important characteristics of their relationships with students.

One recommendation that Downey had was for teachers to ***provide students with meaningful opportunities for classroom participation*** (Downey, 2008, p. 60), a goal that could be reached by “giving students purpose and responsibility for what happens in the classroom and at school” and by “valuing each student’s participation” (Downey, 2008, p. 60). The data collected from the teachers and students that were sampled suggests that this may be largely overlooked. However, if directly asked, it is entirely possible that teachers would strongly support this dimension as important. But, perhaps its absence in this particular study could serve as reinforcement or as a reminder for teachers.

Another recommendation proposed by Downey was to ***promote cooperative learning strategies*** (Downey, 2008, p. 60), a goal that could be accomplished by “using learning teams with group goals and individual accountability to motivate learning” (Downey, 2008, p. 60). This suggestion was widely reported by students as present within the academic enrichment programs, which suggests that teachers viewed these types of opportunities as important. However, teachers did not explicitly speak of the importance of offering such experiences.

Yet another recommendation was for teachers to ***encourage students to tutor each other*** (Downey, 2008, p. 61), by “encouraging older and advanced students to work with younger students” (Downey, 2008, p. 61). Both academic enrichment programs utilized tutors and volunteers that were not officially teachers. While it is possible that such hiring decisions were made because of an awareness of the benefits related to student resilience, it also possible that such decisions were made for financial the benefits of hiring younger and cheaper assistance. Regardless, students consistently commented on the strong connections they were able to develop with tutors and student volunteers.

Downey's final recommendation was for teachers to *encourage their students to participate in extracurricular activities* (Downey, 1998, p. 62). Given that in some respects these academic enrichment programs are actually extracurricular activities in their own right, it is understandable that neither teachers nor students spoke much of this factor. In fact, teachers felt it was particularly important to understand that students were sacrificing their summer's to attend the programs. In this setting, teachers may have felt that the students and the people who influenced their decisions to attend the program are already attuned to the link between extracurricular involvement and resilience.

In light of the findings discussed in the previous three chapters, the paper will now begin to consider them in relation to their implications for teachers, students and for academic enrichment programs.

## **6.2     *Implications of Findings for Teachers***

This section will touch on the implications of the study's findings as they concern teachers and the decisions that they make. Despite the fact that this study primarily yielded comments and findings that could not be directly attributed to teachers within academic enrichment programs, this section will still try to frame the results in the context of such programs. This will be accomplished by explaining the potential implications of certain findings, and their associated recommendations, while giving consideration to the conditions that define summer and/or weekend academic enrichment programs when it is appropriate.

This study found a divergence between literature, teacher perceptions and student perceptions as they are related to performance feedback directed at students. A widely cited study on school-based feedback found that positive feedback from teachers to students is rarely effective because it draws attention to the self, which leads to challenge avoidance. This could potentially occur because once the student has experienced the pleasure of receiving positive, self-based feedback they may intentionally avoid situations that might result in failure and consequently negative feedback from the same teacher (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 102). This highlights the aforementioned preference of students for exclusively positive feedback from their teachers. However, we also found that teachers valued offering both positive and negative feedback to their students because of a belief that their authenticity increased if they provided a balance. Ultimately, Hattie and Timperley believed that providing feedback for students is an art. It is essential for teachers to create a classroom climate that permits them to

provide critical feedback without alienating their students to the point where they question their belonging in a certain program, class or school (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 103). Thus it is important for teachers to be intentional and thoughtful in their distribution of both positive and negative feedback, especially given its potential to get students to question the degree to which they belong, an especially relevant concern for those working with underserved student populations. It is also important because both of these programs pride themselves offering community opportunities and reduced student-teacher ratios that students' traditional schools might not.

Another interesting finding of this study was that students consistently touched on the seemingly insignificant behaviors of teachers as actually being significant. Some of these included: teacher tone of voice, teacher attire choices and classroom accessory choices (clocks, color schemes, etc.). Teachers, on the other hand, did not reflect on the particularities of their behaviors. According to this study, teachers would be wise to think about the importance of the little things that they do on a daily basis. Students may be more attuned to these particularities than teachers think.

While teachers would be smart to consider the smaller details of their behavior, they would be wise to continue giving considerable attention to the bigger classroom structure and culture choices that they make. In doing so, they should think carefully over the implications that such processes will have on the development of relationships with their students. For students, these structures seem to go a long way in determining relationship quality. Given the short duration of these academic enrichment programs, there is little time to positively affect students. This highlights the importance of setting such structures at the outset that clearly delineate expectations for classroom culture, classroom behavior and classroom processes. These will likely help to promote effective use of learning time, but teachers should also be sensitive to the effects that such structures have on their students' relationship perceptions and needs.

Both relevant literature (Masten, 1986, et. al.) and the teacher interviews have confirmed that it is crucial to utilize humor when working with middle school students. The teachers in the academic enrichment programs seemed to realize this and it seemed to be confirmed by their students. However, the students hinted that the teachers at their traditional middle schools did not embrace humor to the same extent. Perhaps this difference could be attributed to the high degrees of autonomy that teachers from independent schools are given in comparison to

public school teachers. Public schools teachers, for a variety of reasons, might feel less secure in utilizing humor. Teachers from academic enrichment programs would be wise to keep including humor in their behavioral repertoire.

Teachers generally acknowledged the importance of truly caring about their students. A few of these teachers were hypersensitive to this need in the context of the enrichment programs because they felt that it was something that students might not be getting enough of at home or at their everyday schools. Reassuringly, both teachers and students spoke positively of ‘care’ in the school and classroom settings. Thus it would make sense for teachers to continue showing how much they care about the growth, happiness and well-being of their students.

On the whole, teachers reported that it was important to listen to students and to be empathetic to what they hear. In fact, students also iterated a preference for good listeners. Furthermore, students commented that they felt that their program teachers were more empathetic to their situations than were their traditional middle school teachers. These findings are significant because of the literature that stresses the importance of teacher empathy. One study that gauged teacher perceptions of the role that empathy plays found that more empathetic teachers had more positive interactions with their students, a more supportive classroom climate, and a more student-centered pedagogy (McAllister & Irvine, 2002, p. 442). If a teacher can create such conditions then they are likely providing a culturally responsive classroom environment, which is a particularly important condition for the student populations of many academic enrichment programs that are enrolling underserved youth.

An important aspect of the present findings relates to student autonomy. Students deeply appreciated opportunities that allowed them to work in groups or independently from their teachers. Despite offering ample opportunities for such types of work, teachers did not speak about such philosophies as related to the relationships that develop with their students. According to a study that looked at beginning teachers’ perceptions of autonomy-oriented pedagogical methods, beginning teachers consistently seemed much more concerned with methods of control than they did about methods supporting student autonomy (Reeve, 1998, p. 322). A basic human psychological need is for autonomy and responsibility. Consequently, teachers would be wise to emphasize pro-autonomy pedagogical strategies.

This study has maintained a strong focus on teachers' interpersonal behaviors and their importance for good student-teacher relationships, but students still expect their teachers to be content experts. Henceforth, it is important for teachers to stay up-to-date in their academic fields and to demonstrate content mastery, especially in the subject(s) that they teach.

In general, students disliked strict, admonishing, uncertain and dissatisfied interpersonal teacher behaviors. Surely there are instances in which such teacher behaviors might be necessary, but the evidence pretty clearly indicates that students do not enjoy such behaviors coming from their teachers. In the context of academic enrichment programs, teachers might want to avoid such potentially detrimental interactions since students are voluntarily enrolled in a relatively short program that seeks to provide students with extra educational opportunities.

### **6.3     *Implications of Findings for Academic Enrichment Programs***

The aim of the present study is not to evaluate the quality of summer academic enrichment programs, but rather to contribute in-depth views on select aspects of the experience. However, it seems that both programs covered by the study provide valuable experiences for enrolled students. This broad assessment is supported by perceptions that developed through first-hand exposure during my data collection period. It also is furthered when these first-hand exposures are considered alongside the findings and resulting recommendations from the aforementioned report on summer learning programs produced by the RAND Corporation's education arm and commissioned by The Wallace Foundation.

As was seen earlier, this report was inspired by a widespread interest in summer learning and provided information on national need for such programs and also on program variables that impacted their effectiveness. The primary findings of this study were that: summer learning loss affects low-income students to a greater extent thus summer learning loss contributes to the educational achievement gap (RAND, 2011, p. 22), students who do not attend these programs have lesser academic outcomes for at least the two years proceeding the program than students who do attend them (RAND, 2011, p. 36), cost is a huge barrier in establishing these programs (RAND, 2011, p. 43) and that it is crucial for programs to maximize quality, enrollment and attendance through intentional processes (RAND, 2011, p. 32-34). Of these primary findings, the most relevant for the present study concerns the processes that are created to ensure quality programs.

The RAND study specifically identifies intentional teacher hiring practices as important for ensuring high-quality programming (RAND, 2011, p. 33). During conversations with directors of both programs that were under study, the following characteristics were highlighted as desirable in the hiring decisions they make: flexibility, patience, humor, empathy and demonstrated experience working with diverse and low-income students. The RAND study suggested that programs make an effort to hire motivated and effective teachers (RAND, 2011, p. 33). Interestingly, when the director of program #1 spoke about how they hired teachers, the director talked about how the hiring process presented an opportunity for the program to be more closely linked to the independent school community, which sometimes may seem separate from each other. It also allowed the program director to handpick teachers they believed to fit the aforementioned criteria they felt were important. In hiring teachers from the independent school community, a clearer bridge between the two entities could develop. In my estimation this is a smart method for the development of positive student-teacher relationships. By choosing teachers who are seen to have demonstrated the desired qualities, there is reduced doubt about their capabilities in working with the program's student population.

The present study's findings can contribute to the staff hiring and training processes. Primary goals of summer academic enrichment programs include: reducing summer learning loss, increasing outcomes and achievement of low-income students, curriculum catch-up, school-year preparation, promoting resilience, promoting character growth through empowerment, increasing the likelihood of eventually obtaining a college degree and to provide experiences students might not receive at their traditional schools. In order to accomplish these goals programs should be staffed by teachers that are capable of teaching in ways that help to reach the goals of the program. Aside from instructional strategies and philosophies, teachers need to be aware of their interpersonal behaviors and the impact that such behaviors can have on these general goals, and in this specific case, the promotion of resilience in their at-risk students.

#### **6.4     *Conclusion***

This section will summarize the findings generated in the present study and will offer additional insights into their possible implications.

From the outset, this study operated from the belief that teachers and their interpersonal behaviors were indispensable for promoting resilience amongst at-risk students. In this instance, the research problem was more of a rationale than it was a problem. The rationale was that close qualitative examination of the behaviors in the relationship between students and teachers would result in findings that could broaden understanding. As a key environmental protective resource, teachers should always be considering the impact that their behavior can have on the work that they do.

From this rationale emerged three guiding research questions. The first question was mostly exploratory in nature, as the goal was to trace the behaviors that both students and teachers spoke about to describe their relationships, classroom strategies and their interpersonal philosophies. This question was addressed in the findings chapter with the assistance of a model of interpersonal teacher behavior that served as the framework for analysis.

The study found a wide array of behaviors to be reported by both students and teachers. In general, teachers spoke a great deal about strategies and philosophies that were categorized as demonstrating behaviors that are seen as being helpful, being friendly, being understanding and also showing leadership. Not surprisingly, teachers spoke very little of behaviors that could be categorized as being dissatisfied, strict, uncertain or admonishing. Furthermore, they did not speak of behaviors related to student autonomy. Students, on the whole, demonstrated a preference for teachers who exhibited behaviors that could be seen as helping, friendly, understanding and also showing leadership. Not surprisingly, students mostly disliked teacher behaviors and strategies that could be fit into the dissatisfied, strict, uncertain and admonishing dimensions of the framework. Within these general findings emerged very specific comments on behaviors and relationships that could prove to be useful for teachers to use in developing their philosophies and strategies, especially within summer and/or weekend academic enrichment programs—many of these were covered in greater detail in the findings chapter.

The second research question was to track the points at which the aforementioned behavioral preferences and perceptions of students and teachers intersected or diverged. Generally speaking, there was much matching between the students and teachers. However, some clear divergences emerged. Interesting divergences that have been illustrated, particularly in chapter five, include: the nature of teacher's feedback, the roles that classroom structures, cultures and procedures play, perceptions of behavioral peculiarities, autonomy for students

and the management of teacher expertise. These findings could be useful when teachers think about their pedagogical philosophies and the strategies that they employ when working with their students.

The third research question was to create an understanding of the potential implications of interpersonal teacher behaviors as they were related to an important consideration that those working with at-risk middle school students should be concerned with—resilience. This study utilized three interrelated models that all traced the factors believed to be conducive to promoting resilience in students. The findings that were produced in response to the first two research questions were considered in light of previous research related to resilience.

The study used three encompassing categories that protective resources or protective possibilities could be sorted into. The first that was considered was “caring relationships” and it seems that teachers have strongly supported the three recommendations that were placed under the umbrella of caring relationships, which included: *building healthy interpersonal relationships with students, developing a meaningful and caring community and using student’s strengths to promote higher self-esteem*. The second category was “*high expectations*”, which highlighted the linkage between resilience and high expectations. Many of the recommendations for conduciveness to resilience fell within this category: *high and realistic expectations for academic performance, consistent expectations for student behavior, ensuring students understand that they are responsible for their own success, teaching life skills and ensuring high-end literacy skills*. While there was general agreement on the presence of and also the importance of having high expectations, there existed some divergences in perceptions between students and teachers on how the process of supporting such recommendations might occur. The third category was “*opportunities for participation*”, which spoke to the belief that it was crucial to offer students opportunities to participate in different activities and exercises that encourage growth. Some of the resilience recommendations fell into this category, including: *providing opportunities for classroom participation, promoting cooperative learning, encouraging students to tutor each other and to urge students to join in on extracurricular activities*. Interestingly, students reported preferring such opportunities and fortunately, they also reported experiencing them. Somewhat unexpectedly, teachers did not speak about presenting such opportunities. This suggested that teachers understand the importance of offering opportunities for participation, but may not see their linkage to resilience.



Overall, this study intended to strengthen the literature base that touches upon interpersonal teacher behavior, student-teacher relationships and resilience. The findings of this study, while neither widely generalizable nor easy to practically apply to contexts beyond the two studied, could possibly prove to be useful for teachers, program planners and program administrators. For teachers, it may be useful to consider the perspectives of their students so that their perspectives can inform the strategies and philosophies that they employ in their classrooms. For program planners and administrators, it may be beneficial to consider these findings when hiring staff and in the subsequent training of their staff members.

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## *Appendix*

### **Interview Guide For Program Administrators:**

1. Tell me about your professional experience...
  - What brought you into the educational access sphere?
2. Tell me about the program...
  - How is the program structured?
  - How do you characterize the aims of your program?
  - What types of students do you enroll?
  - What types of teachers do you hire?
3. What successes and challenges do you often see your teachers experiencing?
  - What challenges do the students present the teachers?
  - What sort of trainings do teachers go through?
4. What about the successes and challenges of students?
  - How is their adjustment process into the program?
  - What sorts of challenges do you often see them experiencing?
  - Do you track their outcomes after finishing the programs?
  - Do you find there to be any short-term or long-term disparities in their performance/outcomes at their traditional schools?
5. What is an ideal student-teacher relationship?
  - Would teachers be considered more as mentors or instructors? Both?
  - How important is this relationship?

## **Interview Guide For Program Teachers:**

1. Why did you choose to teach in this program?
  - What sorts of teaching or instructional experiences do you have?
2. What is it like to be a teacher in this program?
  - Is it different from your other teaching experiences?
3. What do you think are the main responsibilities of teachers in this program?
  - Are these responsibilities unique to this program?
  - Did your training or past experiences help you in fulfilling these responsibilities?
4. What skills do you think are essential for working with students in this program?
  - Relationship skills? Instructional skills? Interpersonal Skills?
5. What goes into maintaining a positive student-teacher relationship?
6. What tactics are important for teachers to employ in their interactions with students?
7. Does working with adolescent/middle school students change the relationships you have with them?
  - What challenges are presented due to their age?
8. In what ways does working with underserved students change relationship dynamics?
  - What challenges are presented due to their background?
  - Are relationships with these students more/less important for the student?

### **Interview Guide For Program Students:**

1. What do you like most about school, in general? What do you like least?
  - What makes this program different?
2. How did you become a part of this program?
3. What do you like the most about this program? What do you dislike?
4. Has this program impacted how you feel about your ability in school?
5. What are the teachers at {program} like?
6. How do you get along with your teacher(s)?
  - Do you learn a lot from them?
  - What sort of things do you learn?
7. How do your teachers treat you?
8. What sorts of behaviors do your teachers display in the classroom?
9. Do you ever have trouble working with certain teachers? Why?
10. Are there teachers that you really like working with? Why?
11. How do they compare to your teachers at your middle school?
12. What would you consider to be your dream teachers?

**Cover Letter attached to Informed Consent Document for Students and Families:**

Dear Parent,

My name is Andrew Reich and I am a master's student at the University of Oslo in Norway. I am in pursuit of my master degree in Comparative and International Education, and part of the degree requirements involves the composition of an original thesis, rooted in data that I collect on my own.

This project is qualitative in nature and I hope to use first hand accounts from students and teachers to better grasp the relationship dynamics that define the connections that students and teachers have at programs such as (Program). Furthermore, I hope to find out if students who see themselves as more or less capable vary at all in the relationships they hold with teachers. Similarly, I hope to find out how teachers view the relationships they hold with their students.

Through the collection of this information, it my hope that such programs can better grasp how students and teachers connect, or fail to connect. This could potentially assist them in the improvement of the services that they deliver.

Attached is an informed consent document. If your child wishes to participate and if you also agree to his/her participation, please sign (digitally is okay, as well) and return this form to myself or (program director). You can also return the form on September 28<sup>th</sup> at the (program) event!

Thank you for your time! Let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Andrew Reich

## **Informed Consent Document for Students and Families:**

### **Parental Informed Consent for Educational Research**

*University of Oslo- Department of Educational Research (Comparative and International Education)*

**Title of Project:** “Characterizing Student-Teacher Relationships in Academic Enrichment Programs”

**Principal Researcher:** Andrew Everett Reich-Masters Student  
University of Oslo (Norway)  
Helga Engs Hus  
Sem Saelands Vei 7  
Oslo, Norway 0371  
(508) 826-3663 or [andrew.e.reich@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.e.reich@gmail.com)

**Supervisor:** Dr. Jon Lauglo  
University of Oslo- Department of Educational Research  
Helga Engs Hus  
Sem Saelands Vei 7  
Oslo, Norway 0371  
[Jon.Lauglo@ped.uio.no](mailto:Jon.Lauglo@ped.uio.no)

**Purpose of Study:** The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the relationship dynamics that exist between students and teachers within academic enrichment programs, and how they vary between students who have different concepts of their academic self. The results will hopefully give educational leaders additional insight about the interconnected nature of students and teachers.

**Study Methods:** The student will be asked to complete a questionnaire that should take no longer than 10 minutes to finish. This questionnaire is designed to gain an understanding of each students’ view of themselves in an academic context. After the researcher evaluates the questionnaires, your child may be asked to take part in a casual 20-30 minute interview, based on how they score on the questionnaire, at a future date. If your child is chosen to

participate in an interview, the program director will reach out to you and your student. This interview will be recorded with a handheld device, unless the student or parent does not wish to be recorded. The interview will consist of questions that try to gain a better understanding of the relationships that students have with their teachers. The study will place at least two programs under examination and I will hopefully be able to conduct interviews with 5-10 students from each program.

**Confidentiality:** Your child's participation in this research is CONFIDENTIAL. The data will be stored and secured in a password-protected file. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. Once the study is completed, all collected data will be destroyed.

**Right to Ask Questions:** You and your child both have the right to ask the researcher questions regarding the study. Furthermore, parents and students have the right to see the questionnaire and the interview questions before they enter the study. Andrew Reich can be contacted at (508) 826-3663 or at [andrew.e.reich@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.e.reich@gmail.com). The anticipated project completion date is May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014.

**Voluntary Participation:** You and your child's decision to be involved with this research is voluntary. Both of you have the right to terminate your involvement at any time. Your child does not have to answer any questions that he/she does not want to answer.

**You will be given a copy of this form for your records.**

**I give permission for my child,(name)\_\_\_\_\_ , to  
participate in this research study.**

**(Parent Signature)\_\_\_\_\_, (Date)\_\_\_\_\_**

**(Researcher Signature)\_\_\_\_\_, (Date)\_\_\_\_\_**

**Cover Letter Attached to Informed Consent Document for Teachers:**

Dear (program) Teachers,

My name is Andrew Reich and I am a master student at the University of Oslo in Norway. I am in pursuit of my master's degree in Comparative and International Education, and part of the degree requirements involves the composition of an original thesis, rooted in data that I collect on my own.

This project is qualitative in nature and I hope to use first-hand accounts from students and teachers to better grasp the relationship dynamics that define the connections that students and teachers have at programs such as (program). Furthermore, I hope to find out if students who see themselves as more or less capable vary at all in the relationships they hold with teachers. Similarly, I hope to find out how teachers view the relationships they hold with their students.

Through the collection of this information, it is my hope that such programs can better grasp how students and teachers connect, or fail to connect. This could potentially assist them in the improvement of the services that they deliver.

Attached is an informed consent document, which will give you a better idea of the methods I am going to employ. If you wish to participate, please sign (digitally is okay, as well) and return this form to myself ([Andrew.e.reich@gmail.com](mailto:Andrew.e.reich@gmail.com)) or (program director) (program director email address). You can also return a printed version of the form at the next (program) meeting!

Thank you for your time! Let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Andrew Reich

## **Informed Consent Document for Program Teachers:**

### **Informed Consent for Educational Research**

*University of Oslo- Department of Educational Research (Comparative and International Education*

**Title of Project:** “Characterizing Student-Teacher Relationships in Academic Enrichment Programs”

**Principal Researcher:** Andrew Everett Reich-Masters Student  
University of Oslo (Norway)  
Helga Engs Hus  
Sem Saelands Vei 7  
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(508) 826-3663 or [andrew.e.reich@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.e.reich@gmail.com)

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University of Oslo- Department of Educational Research  
Helga Engs Hus  
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Oslo, Norway 0371  
[Jon.Lauglo@ped.uio.no](mailto:Jon.Lauglo@ped.uio.no)

**Purpose of Study:** The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the relationship dynamics that exist between student and teachers within academic enrichment programs, and how they vary between students of different concepts of their academic self. The results will hopefully give educational leaders additional insight about the interconnected nature of students and teachers.

**Study Methods:** Students will be asked to complete a questionnaire that should take no longer than 10 minutes to finish. This questionnaire is designed to gain an understanding of each students’ view of themselves in an academic context. After the researcher evaluates the questionnaires, 5-8 students will be asked to take part in a casual 20-30 minute interview, based on how they score on the questionnaire, at a future date. This interview will be recorded



with a handheld device, though you may opt out of this. The interview will consist of questions that try to gain a better understanding of the relationships that teachers have with their students. The study will place at least two programs under examination and I will hopefully be able to conduct interviews with 5-8 students and 5-8 teachers from each program. Additionally, the program director will contact all program teachers to gauge interest in participating in casual 20-30 minute interviews. These interviews will be conducted at a location convenient for the interviewee.

**Questions for Students:** The students who will be interviewed for this project will be asked questions about their teachers. While the questions will not ask the students to directly identify their teachers, it is possible that your identity may be revealed during the interview. However, it is important to note that all recordings will be kept to myself and during the write-up process all identifying information will be changed to protect identities.

**Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is CONFIDENTIAL. The data will be stored and secured in a password-protected file. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. Once the study is completed, all collected data will be destroyed.

**Right to Ask Questions:** You have the right to ask the researcher questions regarding the study. Andrew Reich can be contacted at (508) 826-3663 or at [andrew.e.reich@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.e.reich@gmail.com). The anticipated project completion date is May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be involved with this research is voluntary. You have the right to terminate your involvement at any time. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

**You will be given a copy of this form for your records.**

**(Participant Signature)**\_\_\_\_\_, **(Date)**\_\_\_\_\_

**(Researcher Signature)**\_\_\_\_\_, **(Date)**\_\_\_\_\_

